



S H E R B O R N E.

SHERBORNE;

OR,

THE HOUSE AT THE FOUR WAYS.

BY

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S H E R B O R N E.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD WOMAN APPEARS AGAIN.

THE undetermined course of his walk had brought him across the flower-garden, and through an old orchard into the park, along which he wandered at random, till at length a gleam of moonlight between two black banks of cloud showed him that he was among the fern, just where he had first met Mrs. Atherstone. The weirdlike appearance of the spot, which in the moonlit mist looked like part of a wild heath, the remembrance of his interview with that strange old lady at her lonely house, the intrinsic interest of the story she told, and his own impression

that he had not heard the last of it, combined powerfully to make him think of the evening when he had first come the same way, and he looked up, almost expecting to see her again in the same place. A thick ground-fog, that did not conceal objects a little way off, but dimmed and confused them, hung over the grass, like a luminous cloud, from an indistinctly measurable height of a few feet, causing the clumps of fern to appear in queer and variable shapes hardly to be recognized ; so that, when on looking up he seemed to see the figure of a woman a little way before him, he only thought it was the fern misshapen by the mist. But it was not the fern. It was the same old lady who had met him in the same place before. What could she be here for at this time of night ? He stood still, awaiting her approach, much inclined to avoid her, but unaccountably impelled to resist the inclination.

“ I can be of no use to her,” he thought. “ And, besides, it’s all nonsense. It might do for the plot of a novel with a little alteration to make it look more natural ; but as it is, there is nothing in it beyond the picture of unnecessary suffering, complicated wrongs, chaos of principles, hap-hazard theories of

right, morbid musings, unsettled obstinacy, and indefinite aspirations, which the fundamentally rotten Reformation entailed upon us.”

Nevertheless he stood still expectantly, and felt a strange desire to hear what she had to say, muttering involuntarily, as she drew near to him—

“If it were a question of anything that could possibly constitute a legal right! But the fact is, George Sherborne is legally the rightful heir—there is no mistake about it.”

“Who cares for George Sherborne? Listen to me!” said the old lady in a tone that would not have disgraced Mrs. Siddons, so true is it that true art and true nature meet in true tragedy.

“You here, at this time of night, so far from home, and alone!” said Moreton, suddenly realizing the reality of her appearance.

“Yes; and why not? Who would hurt an old woman like me? And besides, the people about here think I am a ghost, or a witch, or a ghoul—if they know what that means. They wouldn’t come near me for the world.”

“But do you walk about at this hour generally?” asked Moreton.

"And do *you* generally leave a ball-room at this hour," said she, "and walk about without your hat in the fog and dew of a November night alone, as if you had lost your heart and found no owner for it?"

Moreton winced at these last words, felt himself colouring conspicuously, and tried to hide his confusion by laughing it off; which is always a false move, for it hides nothing, and draws attention to the necessity.

"I think," said he, "that the people are right, and you *must* be a witch."

She replied, turning the light of her still undimmed eyes full upon him—"You *have* lost your heart? But you needn't be afraid. I know nothing of your affairs."

"I wish I had gone some other way," thought he.

She smiled sadly, and said, "I was only in joke—and for the first time these fifty-six years. It struck me all of a sudden as so irresistibly droll—just like the miserable drollery of a comic actor, whose furniture has been taken from his sick wife for a debt smaller than the price of one of the boxes at the theatre—so irresistibly droll it seemed in that grim sort of way, the idea that it could possibly signify whether a perfectly friendless

old woman like me came out on a November night or not. But I will tell you at once what brought me here ; and, indeed, you are the very person I particularly wanted to see. There is a young man staying at Bramscote, whose name I *must* know. I think he must be staying there, because I saw him yesterday riding with Sir Roger and one of the Miss Ardens. They passed by my house, and I happened to be near the window at the time. That is why I came here. I knew there was to be a ball through my gossiping old servant, who always persists in telling me the news, and this time fortunately ; so I meant to get round by the windows, and try to see in—for they *must* have a window open somewhere, with such a crowd of people. But now, as you are here, I may be able to find out what I want more effectually, and without the chance of being seen. The young man I mean is tall—I should think nearly six feet, dark, rather slight, but muscular, and what is called wiry. He has a slightly Roman nose, dark eyes and hair, small dark moustache, and looks to be about four or five and twenty."

"That must be Count de Bergerac," said Moreton.

"Provoking!" said Mrs. Atherstone, stamp-

ing her foot like a petulant child. “That won’t do. But are you sure? Oh, *do* try and make it out for me ! ”

“I am sorry to say,” he replied, “that Count de Bergerac is the only person staying at Bramscote who answers your description.”

The poor old lady burst into tears, and sobbed bitterly for several minutes.

“I *did* hope it was he, and now—I am old and—and I see no chance.”

“What *am* I to do? What can I tell her?” thought Moreton, pitying her immensely, and, in spite of himself, feeling an odd sort of interest about her visionary search for an heir who, except in a genealogical point of view, would seem to be of no use if he were found.

“But I believe it is, after all,” she said, recovering herself, “and it will turn out so, sooner or later. He is so like a miniature old Mrs. Sherborne had of her brother, that I cannot help indulging in a fancy which came into my head the moment I saw him. She gave it to me in hopes it might help me to trace him. This man—Mrs. Sherborne’s brother, who lost his inheritance of the estate in the way I told you the other day, had two sons, as you will remember perhaps, the eldest of whom was guillotined in Paris during

the Reign of Terror, and the second went to India. You may remember, too—though it was rather a long story for any one to bear in mind accurately, hearing it only once, that the French *émigré* from whom I learned this in that very house down there, told me how the second son had married and lost his wife, and then married again, just before that terribly eventful visit of mine to Bramscote. Well, he told me, you know, that the first wife had died without children, and that the maiden name of the second wife was Atherstone—my own sister. Now, she may have had a son. If so—where is he? I tell you I have a very strong idea that the young man I saw on horseback yesterday is her grandson. The ages would do, and he is so like that miniature of the old lady's brother, who would be his great-grandfather. And that is not all. Look here! I have brought the miniature with me on purpose to compare it with him."

She pulled out of her pocket a miniature in a leather case. Moreton held it up in the light of the moon, which was at the full, and notwithstanding the heavy mist, brilliant at intervals. He was startled.

"It certainly is like Count de Bergerac," he

said, “and if—but that would be a very wild supposition.”

“What?” said she. “Tell me—tell me at once.”

“Don’t build upon it,” he replied. “It *is* just possible, but very unlikely.”

“What—what is it? Do tell me!”

“Well, it is just possible that he married the heiress of a French family, and that his son succeeded to her title. I don’t know much about France; but certainly, there, as here, some titles do go in the female line; and it may be that your sister’s son married the heiress of a French title, and that her son inherited it. It is just possible, certainly.”

She fixed her eyes on the lighted windows of Bramscote, then on him with a very piteous expression, not easily forgotten, and then again for an instant on the house.

“I will tell you what you must do,” she said. “Don’t—oh! don’t refuse me. There is no one in the world but you to help me, except Don Pascolini, and he cannot do *that*. Will you promise?”

Moreton felt a little natural hesitation about promising to do he knew not what, and do it immediately, but he had not the heart to hesitate in practice.

“Very well, I will,” he said, as he looked at the piteous expression on her worn face. “But what is it that I am to do?” he added, as the instinct of self-preservation reminded him that there are risks and risks. He could not help feeling that he had signed a blank cheque on his own discretionary power, and that he might therefore be placed in a position not only difficult, but embarrassing, perhaps awkward, and perhaps (for the transition is sometimes disagreeably easy) even ridiculous. All the improbable arrangements of adverse circumstances that could possibly contrive to make him most misunderstood in the way that would be hardest to bear rose up before him in an instant, minutely detailed in unseizable shapes that changed in forming, yet always retained some representation of himself in some contemptible character, most obtrusively conspicuous, and always in sight of Miss Arden.

“What is it that I am to do?” he repeated ruefully, as he looked back at the lights of the ball-room where he had last seen her.

Tragedy and comedy met in him at that moment; for embarrassment belongs rather to the one, human suffering to the other—and both were his.

Mrs. Atherstone looked at him with some curiosity and much feeling; in short, with that instinctive comprehension of the heart's pathology which is peculiar to women.

"There will be no awkwardness in doing what I am going to ask you to do," she said, in a voice full of sympathy and persuasiveness. "What I want you to do—and I hope you will do it—is this: I only want you to ask Sir Roger Arden whether Count de Bergerac or his father ever had any other name."

"Is there no other way of doing it?" asked Moreton.

"You can say," she replied, "that I begged you to ask him the question, and that I have a particular reason for wanting to know. Indeed, you may go farther, if you don't mind. You may ask Count de Bergerac himself. Yes, *do* ask him. Say that I have most important reasons for asking the question—reasons which concern him most. Say that, if he is the person I take him for, I have a communication of the utmost importance to make. Say that you will bring him to me to-morrow morning."

"The party breaks up to-morrow morning. He and I and the rest are going away," urged Moreton.

"Never mind," she replied; "he must start a little sooner, and stop at my house on the way. I don't care now who knows it. It won't be half a mile out of his way, and you can go with him to prevent mistakes. Now *do* go at once, and watch for an opportunity—make an opportunity. Oh! you don't know what good you have it in your power to do, but you will know by-and-by. I am certain he is my sister's grandson, and the great-grandson of John Sherborne."

"But if he is, what use is it?" said Moreton, turning very unwillingly and slowly towards the house.

"Leave that to me," answered Mrs. Atherstone. "Women are not such fools as all that."

"I am in for it," he thought, as he set off.
"But what does it matter to me now?"

And he hurried on, feeling as reckless as conscience would allow. Mrs. Atherstone called after him—

"Promise me that, in any case, you will call at my house on your way to the station to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," he said, and walked on.

"And that if he is my sister's grandson, you will certainly bring him to me."

"Yes," he repeated, and was soon out of hearing.

Mrs. Atherstone turned into the footpath, and made the best of her way back to her lonely house at the four cross-roads.

As Moreton approached the house, a fly with luggage on the top was going down the avenue, and passed within a hundred yards of him.

"Who can it be," he thought, "going off at one o'clock in the morning?"

He ran forward, and tried to see inside the fly; but the fog was thick, and the horse going at a hand gallop.

He entered the house by the front door. Near the door leading into the supper-room stood Sherborne and the Anglo-foreign neighbour, Crayston, conversing with an appearance, if not of friendliness, at least of some common interest for the moment.

"I thought those two had hated each other consistently from their Eton days to the present time inclusive," thought Moreton as he passed them.

"I was there at the time," said Crayston in a low voice. "It's of no consequence to me, of course; only it would be a pity, a great pity, that Sir Roger shouldn't know it. You know him better than I do, and——"

"I don't like eaves-dropping," thought Moreton, "but I could not help hearing——"

Some people came by chattering so much that the next few words were inaudible.

"Well," continued Crayston, "it is a pity to see a charming girl——"

Some more chattering people came by, and Moreton was beginning to feel that he must move on.

"Sacrificed like that—just because he happens to be a Pontifical Zouave."

A sudden suspicion darted through Moreton's brain, and broke into detail.

"Sacrificed! He means *her* sister, and refers to Count de Bergerac. Something against him, of course. I don't believe it. Crayston would hate him because he is in the Pontifical Zouaves, and would believe anything of that kind that was told him out of malice or mistake. I suppose Sir Roger knows all about him. I wish I had looked at him more. Mrs. Atherstone is sure that he is her sister's grandson; but that elder branch of the Sherbornes may have gone to the bad—no one knows anything about them. I wish I had noticed him more, so that I could shake off the suspicion pitched higgledy-piggledy before me by such a brute as Crayston, who may

be right by chance. I suppose I shall see Count de Bergerac presently, and then I must observe him more particularly. I wish I had done so sooner."

But the poor fellow had so soon ceased to take notice of anybody or anything in the house except Mary Arden, that he was incompetent to form an opinion; and when at last she happened to pass within a few feet of him, as she did soon after, he was not even competent to think about it. A mist came before his eyes, and he presently found himself in the ball-room, gradually remembering that he had promised Mrs. Atherstone to ask Sir Roger Arden about this same Count de Bergerac.

He remembered it slowly, and slowly he made up his mind that the thing had to be done, notwithstanding the difference of circumstances. Many times did he try to steady his hesitation by telling himself sternly that a promise is a promise; many times he worked on his own feelings with a piteous picture of the poor old woman appealing to him in her distress as the only person who could help her. "But I had not overheard Crayston then—and he may be right," whispered one sort of impulse, to which we will give the benefit of the doubt, and call prudence.

"But it is possible he may have been speaking of some one else ; besides, I had no business to overhear him," said an impulse of a different description.

"But I couldn't help it," urged the first ; "and when it concerned the welfare of friends——"

"But that is the very reason why I should ask the question," said the second ; and off he started in pursuit of Sir Roger.

Once more on his way was he tempted to excuse himself from the embarrassing question. Quite suddenly he turned pale, and muttered under his breath—

"Oh, if she had known what she was asking me to do !"

He appeared to shrink from his own words, as if they referred to some worse difficulty than he had yet realized ; and he thought he would go and talk to Lord Oxborough, who was standing near, or dance with one of his daughters, on the plea that they were relations. One of them was engaged, and the other waiting to be, but not to Moreton. Lord Oxborough was meditating a serious descent upon the supper, and Lady Oxborough was looking into space over her fan. Moreton preferred the embarrassing question ; and,

setting out in earnest, soon met Sir Roger Arden.

“I have been looking for you,” said Sir Roger, coming up to him with that pleasant manner of hospitality which, when natural, as it was in him, puts people at their ease without causing or allowing them to feel that they could be otherwise.

Moreton was just going to avow that he had been looking for him ; but he had the wit to stop in time, so as to let his question, when he should ask it, seem spontaneous and unavoidable. He began with a pleasantly turned compliment about the ball, and then went on to speak of the agreeable people he had met in the course of his agreeable visit. It was fortunate that he was not called upon to give a description of them and their merits, for his impressions of them had long since been effaced by the image of Mary Arden.

“I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you here again,” said Sir Roger ; “and I am very glad to hear that you are coming into the neighbourhood.”

“I—I don’t think I shall,” said Moreton, beginning to lose his presence of mind. “But, by the bye, whose fly was that going off just now ? ”

"Count de Bergerac's. He will only be just in time to catch the night train. He is in the Zouaves, and he is hurrying back to Rome. His leave is up."

"Yes—I wonder whether his father was English?"

"Not that I am aware of." He turned aside, and Moreton perceived, to his horror, that Miss Winifred Arden was standing near.

"She will think that I am prying about the man she is apparently engaged to, and telling lies about him," thought he.

Poor Moreton! He broke off into a stifled groan, and felt rooted to the spot.

Sir Roger, who saw nothing extraordinary in the question, quietly said, "My dear, do you happen to know whether Count de Bergerac is of English extraction?"

"I don't know. Yes, I think he is," she replied; and Moreton, shrinking from her eyes, all the more because they looked away from him, crept into a corner, feeling as much ashamed of himself as if he had done something shameful.

The dancing was kept up with great spirit, particularly on the part of Miss Hermione Crumps. At half-past three o'clock Sherborne might have been seen driving down the

avenue in a dog-cart and a bad humour, on bad terms with himself and others. The lights in the ball-room were then being put out, the last carriage had left the door, and the stablemen, with their lanterns, had gone away. A little while later, and every window was dark, except in Moreton's room.

CHAPTER II.

D'insolito valore
Sento che ho il sen ripieno ;
E quel valor che ho in seno,
Sento che mio non è.

METASTASIO.

THE light in Moreton's room might have been seen till daybreak and after ; he had neither taken nor sought rest. But he had found repose of that sort which alone can co-exist with real sorrow ; and this was how he found it. He knelt at the crucifix and offered up his suffering voluntarily to God.

The pale November sun had risen above the hills near Ledchester before he could make up his mind to face the fact and make the offering ; but at last he did make it fully, and then he could face anything. Once only, just before leaving the room to hear Mass, his firmness wavered for an instant, as his eyes fell on the dark blue outline of those hills on

which he had looked so often during the last fortnight.

Perhaps there is no inanimate thing that has the same power of recalling scenes and sensations to the mind as a line of distant hills. A picture, a glove, a handwriting may be more vividly symbolical ; the mind itself can conjure up, out of its own recollections, minuter details of day-dreams hopelessly dispelled ; but a line of low hills, rising gradually in dark blue undulations into an horizon tipped with an atmosphere of gold-tinted light, has a disposing power more subtle and more suggestive. Its symbolism is as wide as the whole space we can see over, and extends into depths of imaginable distance beyond.

This may seem exaggerated, but to Moreton it was so evident that it quickly became unendurable, and forced him from the window. He turned away slowly, unwilling to lose the sight, unable to bear it.

Everything in the house seemed altered. The passages, as he walked along them, felt cold, though they were warmed with hot air ; the colour of the walls looked hard, though the light was yet dim. If the distant hills, tipped with the fresh hues of sunrise, reminded him of the ideal past, the house was sugges-

tive of present realities. The housemaids appeared to sweep with more than usual vigour, and a more exclusive concentration of will. He saw them in his mind's eye hard at work with brooms and tea-leaves, "cleaning up" his own room while the 11.35 train was steaming him towards London. That night of interior warfare, in crowds and in solitude, had made sensation morbidly sharp. Out of doors the wind sounded hollow and wailing, the cawing of the rooks harsh and loud.

The church stood a little way outside the park and close to the village. It had been built long enough to combine the advantages of time and architecture nearly as far as the restrictive conditions of the period would allow. It had escaped the pre-Puginian attempts at Gothic revival, had lost its newness, and was not unfinished. The colour of the stone had done much towards giving a negative appearance of age to a building whose style and local accidents favoured the pleasant delusion. The church was early English, and it was placed in a little churchyard, whose wall almost touched the nearest cottage garden; so that by a little involuntary effort of imagination, such as most of us, perhaps, indulge in at times, though not always in so

harmless a manner, it would have been just possible to forget, for a moment or two, that the Faith is a stranger among a peasantry which owes to her its emancipation from serfdom, a by-word in the ears of a squirearchy, to whose estates and position she alone can give a sound moral title, a stumbling-block to the idolizers of a constitution which, but for her, would not have existed at all. For a very brief space of time you might have stood there and forgotten the hideous hypocrisy of the Reformation.

Moreton happened to look round as he entered the porch. The movement was instinctive, but, as far as he knew, unconscious, for he supposed himself to have become suddenly aware that he had done so, and that Miss Arden and her sister were walking down the avenue. They were too far off to be recognized by the eye alone; and yet he felt as nervously self-conscious as if she were near. Just for one moment he stood still in the porch, and his heart fluttered as the thought flashed across him against his will, “If I had the right to go with her every morning to hear Mass——”

Then he opened the door quickly, and fixing his eyes on the sanctuary lamp, felt that in

the presence of the Blessed Sacrament sorrow loses its bitterness. His hopes and fears were alike tranquilized.

It was past nine o'clock before he thought of returning, and some minutes later before he left the church. Then he began to be aware that he had promised something ; and at once, as when, after an unbroken sleep, indefinite consciousness bursts forth into a definite form, his promise to Mrs. Atherstone confronted him in the porch. He turned round, raised his eyes to the church clock, and looked at it unintelligently.

"I wish I could have gone there before breakfast," he thought, "and got it over. I don't know how I can do it on my way to the station, or be of any use to her or to any one else, if I do."

Then he set off homewards at a slow pace, that became slower as he came nearer to the house and therefore nearer to the time of his interview with Sir Roger ; for, indeed, it is one thing to form a resolution, and another to maintain it. Words had never seemed so unmanageable : the more he tried to arrange them, the more he failed ; so that at last he muttered to himself, "I suppose I shall say what I mean somehow when it comes to the

point," and made up a grim smile, as a mechanical self-encouragement.

Though the ball had been kept up till past three o'clock, the attractions and terrors of the 11.35 express train had enforced punctuality on those whom it concerned; some half-dozen people were already at breakfast, and others were dropping in by ones and twos. Three or four lymphatic neighbours, who were going to drive home, remained in bed till two o'clock, and felt what is called an honest pride when they contemplated the feat.

Sitting down in the first chair that stood in his way, Moreton found himself next to Sherborne. The latter looked rather too cheerful under his exact circumstances: an accurate observer, aware of the same, might have thought that he was stimulating a doubtful resolution. They spoke at intervals, rapidly. Sherborne seemed anxious to talk down the evidence of having a weight on his mind; Moreton found the weight on his own so great that he had no energy to spare.

"The chestnut mare kicked my dog-cart to pieces last night at the bottom of the avenue," said Sherborne, "and so I slept here, and sent this morning for my things to dress."

"Was the mare hurt?" asked Moreton.

"No," answered Sherborne.

"Oh!" said Moreton.

Presently Moreton roused himself and said, "I am very glad you got off all right;" and looked nervously at his watch. It was ten minutes past ten. Within an hour he must be on his way to the station; but Sir Roger showed no symptoms of moving, and everybody showed symptoms of an intention to absorb his time as much as possible.

"Nevertheless," said Moreton internally, "I *will* see him alone between this time and eleven o'clock."

He grew several shades paler, but he spoke in a firm voice such conversational fragments as occurred to him during the next few minutes. He talked to the young lady on his right about the Mont Cenis tunnel, and the merits of the trois-temps waltz, listened with profound inattention to an amusing story told by some one on the opposite side of the table, and otherwise managed well to avoid particular notice.

"How happy people look," said Sherborne, "when they are just going to travel, at the rate of forty miles an hour, away from a scene of worked-out festivities!"

Moreton thought for a minute or two, and replied—

“Brisk, lively, satisfied by the help of anticipation, perhaps cheerful; but happiness is a different thing.”

“You think they all look unhappy?” asked Sherborne, listening a good deal with one ear, and giving some of his attention fixedly.

“No; that is what I don’t mean,” answered Moreton, making at the same moment a feint of getting up, as if for the purpose of inducing other people to believe that every one else was about to do so in reality.

But the people were not persuaded, and Sherborne’s eyebrows asked—

“What, then, *do* you mean?”

Moreton gave another tug at his watch-chain, looked straight before him, and replied—

“I take it that happiness is beside the question. I mean that something less, something different, will do as well for the requirements of their position.

“What else? and how do you define happiness?” asked Sherborne.

By this time Sir Thomas Grubhedge was beginning to have finished his breakfast, and the hum of voices had ceased to be continuous. Moreton wished that he had been less accurate; but, after pausing a few seconds to bring back his mind from the impending

interview to the subject of Sherborne's question, replied—

"It is sufficient, I think, that they should be, as they are, cheerful—or rather, cheery, by which I mean under the influence of the inclination, rather than enjoying the results. As to defining happiness, I confine myself to that kind which is attainable in this life, under average circumstances. I haven't time to define it now, for I must be moving, and I have other things to think about; but one thing is proper to it certainly, and that thing is wanting in the majority of the people you were speaking of—I mean repose. They enjoy the movement, rather than the nature, of the life which they lead. And now I must be off."

Then, seeing that two or three people had got up from their chairs, he left the room, and waited about, pretending to look after his luggage, till Sir Roger appeared, when he came forward, and with a calmness that astonished himself, said—

"I wish to speak with you for a few moments alone."

Sir Roger tried hard to make it appear that he was not surprised, but the effort was not quite successful, just because what he wanted to

show was true. For surely it is more difficult to disguise what one imagines one's self to seem, than to make one's self seem what one knows one is not.

Perhaps the character of the room they entered was not reassuring to Moreton. A large library table was covered with papers and pamphlets, agricultural, magisterial, and otherwise, suggestive of bucolic business. The books visible on the shelves were of the same sort, diversified by Charles Butler's *Memoirs*, and an obsolete Greek Lexicon in a brown binding. Even a vellum-bound "*Gerusalemme Liberata*" would have softened the expression of those dark mahogany shelves ; and "*Mrs. Brown at the Sea-side*" would have relieved the stiffness of the statistical literature that looked sternly at home on the writing-table ; but neither of them was there, or else he was too much agitated to perceive them. Agitated he certainly was, quietly agitated, like the sea after a storm, when the water looks calm, and the swell causes huge vessels to roll helplessly ; but he had something to say, and he meant to say it ; so he began at once. He said—

"Sir Roger, I am going to speak of that which in this world concerns me personally

more than anything else ; and I have no expectation—indeed, strictly speaking, no hope, that the result can be otherwise than irremediably disastrous to myself, within limits which, if I were not a Catholic, would have no existence. I say this at the outset, because I had rather not be misunderstood, which I might easily be ; for my words will be few, and perhaps they will seem very cold. I can't help it, and perhaps you will understand why—I hope you will."

Sir Roger was now really surprised, and therefore, by dint of much effort, he contrived to make it almost appear that he was not. He pulled hard at the breath which had suddenly grown short, and began to say—

"It will always be a pleasure to me to——"

"Not this time, I think," interrupted Moreton. "But I will not keep you in suspense. Listen for two minutes, and I shall have finished."

"Oh, what in the world can it be?" thought Sir Roger, who being slow of perception, was only just beginning to be alarmed. "Can he have got into difficulties and——? No! I really can't—I have a family and great expenses, and everything is put on the land now-a-days."

So fully impressed was he by this time with the fear of being requested to back a bill just as a mere form, or lend a hundred pounds for a period whose end would recede, like a jack-o'-lantern on a bog, that his embarrassment became quite apparent ; but Moreton looked straight to his front, and said with a very distinct articulation very slowly—

“It is unfortunate that a man can never pay the highest compliment possible to a woman without apparently inferring one to himself, that often he cannot do so without at the same time proposing to her a loss, either of position or material prosperity, which he is unable to counterbalance, and that he is not unlikely to do all this in blamable ignorance of being unacceptable on his own intrinsic account.”

Sir Roger’s intellect was not constructed to realize abstract propositions. Moreton little thought what unpleasant suspicions, dim and various, he was causing. He knew what he wanted to say, he wanted to say it exactly, and he attended to nothing else. So he went on in these words :—

“That the compliment (inadequate word as it is) should be inferred to one’s self in such a

case is offensive to one's sense of chivalry, and one's appreciation of its particular object; but it is inevitable: no man, whatever his circumstances may be, can help it. The inability of individuals to offer befitting worldly advantages is a relative and sometimes remediable difficulty: it does not in every case demand silence, or excuse it; but still less does the uncertainty as to being otherwise acceptable do so. I should despise myself, and something more, if I could be kept silent by either the one or the other; for I should see in such a line of conduct nothing but evidence of weakness, pride, vanity, indecision, selfishness, and incapability of true attachment. If a man is not prepared to risk being refused by the woman he loves, and snubbed by her father or guardian, he deludes himself, and his supposed affection is not worth her having. Sir Roger Arden, I will not act so; and, therefore, I have come into this room to tell you, before I leave the house in which you have so hospitably and so kindly received me during the last three weeks, just this:—I have stayed here too long for my own peace of mind, for I have involuntarily, and without my own knowledge till it was too late, allowed my affections to fix themselves once for all on

Miss Arden. I do not believe that you would consent: I have no reason whatever to assume or imagine or hope that she would accept me if you did: I simply tell you this because it is right that I should. Good-bye! I will write from London my thanks for all your kindness. I cannot say more now. I have written to get off buying that little property near here, and I shall be out of England in about eight and forty hours most probably. Good-bye, and thank you again for your great friendliness to me."

He held out his hand, at the same time turning slightly away, and muttering that the fly must be at the door; but Sir Roger detained him with a sudden grasp, and his countenance gave evidence of much quiet feeling.

"No, no," he said, "you mustn't go like that. Listen to me now. I like and respect you, and I wish it could be—indeed I do. It isn't money that is in the way. I believe there would be sufficient; and when a man is worthy of one's daughter that is enough. No! it isn't that, I assure you: and, as to her, well—I can't say, of course, but I think you might have as good a chance, or better. No, I wish it might be—I do, indeed; and to show you that I am in earnest, I will say what, per-

haps, I ought not to—to say, for fear of raising false hopes."

Moreton had kept his self-possession wonderfully well up to that moment, but his firmness began to give way now, as the sunshine melts what the frost only hardens. For the first time since entering that room he sat down and listened because he could not speak.

" You remember the Fyfields ? " said Sir Roger. " Well, Lady Fyfield, the mother of the present young fellow (who only came of age the other day), was a niece of Sir Thomas Grubhedge. She became a Catholic. Her husband, who was older than herself and had been at Oxford in the days of the Tractarians, stuck to Puseyism, but was received into the Church a short time before his death, which happened four or five years after their marriage. I have a great regard for her, the more so because she was an intimate friend of my—my late wife's."

Here he stopped rather suddenly, and when he began again to speak, his voice was different for a few seconds.

" Well, then," he said, " you see, we saw a good deal of her, and young Bertram was often here, too, and—and the fact is, he fell in love with Mary."

Moreton felt as if innumerable red-hot pins had been driven sharply into his forehead and the roots of his hair ; but he gave no visible sign of emotion, and Sir Roger proceeded to say—

“ Mary refused him at first; but when he declared it would break his heart, and be the ruin of him, she, not having cared for any one else, gave him a sort of conditional promise ; that is, she consented to try whether she could like him sufficiently, if his conduct should have satisfied me at the end of a year—for he had shown symptoms of wildness. I can’t tell how it will turn out. Lady Fyfield is sure that it would be the turning-point of his life, and make him everything that could be wished ; but then, a mother’s feelings might deceive her. I am sure I don’t know : she is very confident about it. But I am afraid I have said too much. Fyfield really seems to be all that could be wished now ; and she, I fancy, has made up her mind. I—I think you had better, perhaps, think no more about it. Good-bye, God bless you ! ”

He turned aside nervously, and retreated to the writing-table without raising his eyes, or shaking hands. Moreton walked mechanically to the door, and was on the point of opening

it, when the butler entered, and told Sir Roger that Sherborne wanted to speak to him. Sherborne followed immediately, and when he was well inside the room, said—

“I won’t keep you a moment, and I had rather we were all three present—I had rather that what I am going to say shouldn’t seem a hole-and-corner sort of thing.”

Sir Roger rose from behind the writing-table at which he had been gradually sitting down, and the expression of his countenance showed surprise, hope of extrication, fear of worse, mere perplexity; but the latter predominated.

“By all means,” he said, coming forward with a resolute smile. “What is it?”

Moreton was leaving the room in spite of Sherborne’s desire that he should remain, when the latter said again—

“I had rather we were all three here, I assure you.”

And Sir Roger, who probably felt that there was safety, even from an embarrassment, in numbers, backed the request so heartily, that he said—

“Very well,” and remained, only adding, “But remember the train.”

“All right,” interrupted Sherborne. “I

will take you there in time in my dog-cart, luggage and all. Now, Sir Roger, I am going to ask you a question which will seem an impertinent one, but is certainly not meant as such. Do you know Count de Bergerac well?"

"Oh! well—no—yes, in a way. I have seen a good deal of him," answered Sir Roger, his mind conjuring up all sorts of perplexities with a rapidity quite unusual to it.

"I mean rather to say, Do you know much about him?" said Sherborne, fixing his eyes on Sir Roger acutely.

Sir Roger did not groan aloud, but appeared to repress with much effort an audible sign of excessive perturbation. His right hand rose in an undecided manner to his forehead, and after passing it quickly to and fro, as if it were rubbing off a midge, or resenting the sting of a wasp, descended helplessly into his trousers pocket; his left seized his watch-chain, trying the soundness of the links more than a little.

"Oh! well," he said, "yes—know much about him? Ahem! Well, Lady Fyfield introduced him. She met him at Rome in society—in good houses, you know; and besides, she knew his mother."

"All right, then, I suppose," answered

Sherborne; adding in an audibly low voice to Moreton, “But it isn’t.”

Moreton turned away resolutely, and gave no answer.

“ You are not going to make me seem mixed up in this story, whatever it is,” said he to himself.

So he stood stiff and silent, abstracting both sight and attention most conspicuously from the object that bid for them. Small blame to him! The instinct of self-preservation, of that sort which has least of self in it, pulled him by the sleeve, and said, “ If you let yourself seem to enter into a question of that sort where *her* sister is concerned, you are a fool, that’s all ! ”

Sir Roger’s mind had reached the conclusion that Sherborne must unfold his meaning, and he signified the same in plain words hurriedly. Sherborne put his hand on the door, and said, “ Good-bye, I must be off.” Moreton, trying to look as if he neither saw nor heard, shook hands again with Sir Roger, and left the room. Then there was a moment of silence, after which the following dialogue took place.

Sir Roger. “ My dear Sherborne, you really ought to tell me what you alluded to.”

Sherborne. “ Well, but when you said that Lady Fyfield, I—I supposed, of course, she knew all about him.”

Sir Roger. “ Yes; but it’s only fair to—to him, you know, if there is—you know there might be some libellous gossip about any one.”

Sherborne. “ Exactly; and as you know all about him——”

Sir Roger. “ Yes—well, of course; but it’s only right that—that you should tell me what you meant, since you have begun.”

Sherborne. “ You see, I began because I felt it my duty to do so, as I knew nothing about Count de Bergerac; but since Lady Fyfield knows all about him, it really seems an impertinence to go on. But, of course, if you desire it——”

Sir Roger. “ Certainly I do!”

Sherborne. “ Mind, it was Crayston who told me; I know nothing about it myself. He said that Count de Bergerac was mixed up with a gambling affair at Florence, in which two young fellows of eighteen or nineteen were cheated out of a considerable sum; that in consequence of their (or their parents’) anxiety to prevent its getting known and damaging their prospects, the story was kept quiet; and that he soon after joined the Pontifical Zouaves.

Crayston heard the story from a man who was at Florence when it happened ; and he can tell you more about it than I can, for he told it to me last night, and we were interrupted before he could finish what he was saying. Of course this is a very painful thing for me to tell, and puts me in an invidious position, so much so, that when you said Lady Fyfield had introduced him, I felt but—too glad to get out of it.”

Sir Roger. “Thank you very much for telling me. It was very friendly of you. And, besides, it wouldn’t be fair towards him to say nothing. It is only right that it should be —cleared up, you know.”

Sherborne. “Well, good-bye. I am very glad you take it as I meant it. I must be off to catch the train.”

When the door had closed upon him Sir Roger buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud, muttering more than once, “But suppose there should be something in it ! ”

Moreton in the mean while had hurried from the house, and was standing by Sherborne’s dog-cart. He had seen Mary Arden in the distance, hesitated, turned towards her, and rushed onwards again.

They started at a gallop, and went at that pace for about two miles. During that time he kept his eyes on the grey mist without noticing it. He neither spoke, nor heard, nor saw.

CHAPTER III.

“Silence that dreadful bell !”

Othello.

EVEN at the end of the first two miles Moreton was not fully conscious of being spoken to, but inclined his head, made an inarticulate sound of assent, and again looked forth indefinitely. Sherborne said to himself in a low voice, “Oh, is that it ?” and then aloud to the groom, “Put him up to the cheek next time.” This was all that passed on their way to the station, which they reached in time to have the bell rung in their faces, as they jumped on the platform after crossing to the other side of the line.

The sharp sound of the bell awoke Moreton to a distinct, though by no means clear consciousness. He took his ticket, saw his luggage labelled, got into a carriage where Don Pascolini had already taken his place,

and presently said to Sherborne, who had taken the opposite seat—

“Ah, yes! you know. A lie, no doubt: most things are. I know nothing about him. One generally does know nothing about people.”

Thought Sherborne, “You are not a fool, nor eccentric. What does this dreamy language mean?”

Presently Moreton shook himself, and, making a strong effort to smile said, “But seriously, you don’t believe about that gambling business?”

“I am afraid I do,” answered Sherborne gravely. “Crayston had it from a man who was present, and from the father of one of the two men who were swindled. I put it as mildly as I could to Sir Roger, because I pitied him so, and wanted to break it to him in a way; but there is no doubt at all as to the fact.”

Then, as if willing to change the subject, he took a recently published edition of Tennyson’s Poems out of his pocket, and opened it at the “Northern Farmer.”

“Dosen’t thou ‘ear my ‘erse’s legs, as they canters awaäy?
Property, Property, Property—that’s what I ‘ears ‘em saäy.
Property, Property, Property—Sam, thou’s an ass for thy
pains;
There’s more sense i’ one o’ is legs nor in all thy brains.”

"Capital lines, these," said Sherborne, pointing to the book.

"Yes," replied Moreton, "as describing the national idol; the idol of this age, rather—for it is not in England alone that material prosperity is the goal to which all men's energies are directed. This worship seems to have become much more general in all classes of late years. Either things themselves are changed, or they impress me differently."

Sherborne. "Ah, no doubt! When a man returns to his own country after some years' absence, experience and curiosity form an offensive and defensive alliance against many a foregone impression and conclusion.

Moreton. "Especially against those, and they are many, which end with a reservation, like the last nights of a play."

Sherborne. "By the bye, I should be glad to hear some of the conclusions you have arrived at during your stay in the quiet country house we have just left, where billiards, *battues*, bad novels, and relays of fast people arriving by fast trains, were not the exclusive objects of attraction. One of them, no doubt, is that God made the country, and made it suggestive of the good and the beautiful, but that pauperism has destroyed its moral harmony,

and that if—— Here followed, no doubt, some restorative theories evolved out of your inner consciousness, veiled in total obscurity.”

Moreton. “No doubt many chaotic fancies—I cannot call them thoughts—like aqueous rocks in the process of formation, float about in our minds at the time of life when we encourage ourselves to muse, without having begun to think.”

Sherborne. “Just so. I can remember that at^{the} age of aspirations I occasionally indulged in some very misty musings plagiarized from Goldsmith’s ‘Deserted Village,’ but these musings changed their form as they grew more distinct, like the outline of a hill-side when the fog is clearing off, and they have lately been superseded by strong opinions in favour of English country life.”

Moreton. “I agree with you, if not exactly as it is, at least as it would be if its true principles were truly followed.”

Sherborne. “And one must own, that with some reservation, there is a good deal to be said for the Northern Farmer’s appreciation of property, though his notions of its duties might, perhaps, be somewhat hazy; for instance, he would consider that medical loan-tickets ought to be well paid up, of which I had

an example last week at the Lyneham Board of Guardians—several excellent persons loudly insisting that a man who had just got back into work, after some months' illness, and had barely the means to feed his wife and children, should be made to pay up the loan-tickets for his parish doctor's advice during the past three months."

Moreton. "Ah, well, perhaps you can at times perceive that the vaunted Poor Law system does not quite take the place of the monasteries after all."

Sherborne. "You mean that the old monks, who gave medicine and food in times of distress without any loan-tickets, took better care of the poor than we do,—"

Moreton. "Yes ; and had a juster appreciation of the duties of property than the world has in this enlightened age. You will be inclined to own this, perhaps, when any particular fact strikes you; yet I remember, when I pointed out the ruined walls of the old Priory to Don Pascolini the first day of our arrival at Bramscote, you said that *now* they added to the effect of the picturesque, and could no longer interfere with progress."

"I want to get into this carriage ; there's plenty of room," said a voice, at the sound of

which Moreton muttered a mournful “Good gracious!” And at the same moment Miss Hermione Crumps appeared at the door, while Sherborne whispered, “Now I shall be asked about the ghost at Hazeley.”

Mr. Linus Jones handed her in, a porter put several shawls and a bonnet-box on one of the rails overhead, the guard’s whistle emitted a metallic scream, and off went the train—puff, puff, puff, puff, shaking and grinding, and jerking, and indescribably smelling as trains only do smell. Wonderful is that smell, quite different from any other, and sickening withal.

Miss Hermione arranged her wraps and her hair. Sherborne looked ready to be, or to seem, amused. Don Pascolini was in the corner, saying his Office. Sir Thomas and Lady Alicia Grubhedge had got in at the last moment—he, much discomposed in his proper dignity by being late; she, repeating in a monotonous murmur, “There is no occasion to hurry in such a way.”

“And so,” thought Moreton, “old Grubhedge, in the days of long ago, caused a ‘change to come over the spirit of’ George Sherborne’s dream; and no doubt George Sherborne was going to break his heart!

‘ Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them ; but not for love.’”

Then he began to speculate grimly on his own future experiences ; and, though he was not aware of it, he did all this for a relief, as one uses burning lotions to mitigate pain. But Miss Hermione Crumps, as soon as she had settled her hair, adjusted her chignon, smoothed out a wrinkle in her right-hand glove, and made a general self-inspection rapidly, singled him out for conversation, at least inclusively, by saying :—

“ Oh, Mr. Moreton, do you know I have heard a lot more about the ghost.”

“ It generally is a prolific subject,” answered Moreton.

“ If you will tell me whereabouts and at what o’clock it appears, I will sit up and pay my respects to it,” said Sherborne.

“ It was an old woman,” said Miss Hermione, “ and she was seen at the window of that curious old room which everybody admired so the other day, when we lunched with you. You know, Mr. Sherborne, some of the old women in the village declare there is a secret closet behind the panelling.”

“ With the original skeleton in the cupboard there ? ” said Sherborne.

"I don't know what there is in it," she said, "but I dare say the old witch who lives in the house at the Four Ways knows all about it."

Then she was silent for a few seconds, and flushed firmly. "She means mischief," thought Moreton, and even whilst the thought was crossing his mind, she opened her eyes upon him, saying:—

"I believe *you* know all about the old witch. They say you and some one else paid her a visit."

"Really, this is a dreadful sort of woman!" thought Moreton, with such intense and sudden earnestness that the words almost forced themselves into articulate sound.

Sherborne laughed in an encouraging tone, Sir Thomas Grubhedge rounded his eyes, and Lady Alicia laid aside *The Rock*, while Don Pascolini, happily impervious to interruption, went on saying his Office as if nothing had happened. Moreton's embarrassment was but accidentally controllable. Ten days sooner it must have betrayed itself, but how could he feel any difficulty now below the surface?

"No, I didn't mean that—I meant to say that you were talking to her in the park at

Bramscote one afternoon," interrupted Miss Hermione.

"Oh, by the bye, yes, I did speak to an old woman—or rather, she spoke to me. Do you know anything about her?" said Moreton, feeling much relieved, and trying hard to look indifferent.

"You are sure you didn't go and call on the old witch?" said she.

"I paid her a visit by moonlight, and we had a ride on two broom-sticks," he replied, almost wishing for a mild collision with a luggage train, as the only chance of escape from this *enfant terrible*.

"Then you have seen that old woman?" said Sherborne. "I suppose she told you a long story about old Mrs. Sherborne, whose husband (and he was her cousin as well) got the property after her father had sided with Prince Charlie. I know her very well. She is a woman of good family. She was left the house at the Four Ways by that Mrs. Sherborne. She was her companion. Alfred Sherborne, the old lady's youngest grandson, fell in love with her, and was accidentally drowned soon after his father had made a great row about it. They say she has never been in her right mind since; at any rate, she is a monomaniac

now. She fancies that Mrs. Sherborne told her to look out for her father's direct male heir; and she persists in saying that this possible descendant—whose existence is at least doubtful, and who, if he does exist, is not the legal heir—ought to have the property given up to him. She has told me so once, and she sticks to it, I know, with all the argumentative unreasonableness of a monomaniac. I hope she won't take to pitching tents on the property, like the irrepressible 'Countess of Derwentwater.' Surely you must remember hearing of her and her eccentricities when you were a boy! and you must have seen her, too, walking by herself in the dusk, with a thick black veil over her face."

"Oh yes! I remember her," said Moreton, catching at the first pause, for fear of what might follow. "They used to tell me all sorts of stories about her, when I was a child; and later on, I saw her, once or twice, somewhere in one of the lanes near her house."

"Did she tell you about the heir when you saw her the other day?" asked Sherborne in a careless voice.

"She *did* say something about it, and a lot about old Mrs. Sherborne, and the Sherbornes of former days," answered Moreton.

"Perhaps she's the ghost," said Miss Hermione, "that was seen at the window. They say no one ever heard her footsteps, and——"

"Exham Road! Passengers for the Gatesbury Branch—Fordington, Mudgeley, Ashborough, or Flaxbourne, change carriages here," shouted a stout porter with a fat face, red and shiny.

"And she never would let any one shake hands with her. Oh! there is the wagonette, and the Archdeacon and Mrs.——"

"Please 'm, the train's behind time."

"And Ethel and Amy, and—stop! you haven't got my box—and, depend upon it, she's the ghost."

Grateful, indeed, was Moreton, to the Gatesbury Branch—Fordington, Mudgeley, Ashborough, and Flaxbourne, but to the Archdeacon especially, his wagonette, his wife and all his family—Ethel, Amy, and the rest, for the departure of Miss Hermione Crumps, and not otherwise than thankful when Sherborne jumped out, saying, "Good-bye, I must get on the other line."

Then the train began to move, and conversation went on thus:—

Sir Thomas Grubhedge. "Plenty to say for herself."

Moreton (feelingly). "Indeed, she has."

Lady Alicia Grubhedge. "She is rather forward, I must say."

Moreton. "Oh, I didn't mean that. I—I meant to say, you know——"

Lady Alicia Grubhedge. "The manners of the day are atrocious, and there's no respect for anything now. How can there be, when such people are let into society, and no principle in anybody, and nothing as it used to be. My father always said how it would be if they passed Emancipation, and let in the Papists——"

Sir Thomas Grubhedge (in a fat whisper, indicating Moreton with his elbow, but abstracting his gaze from Don Pascolini). "My dear, don't!"

Lady Alicia Grubhedge. "Dear me, I forgot! I ought not to have said that. You see, when I was a girl——"

Sir Thomas Grubhedge. "Political feeling ran high; and, no doubt, you, whom I should judge to be a liberal Roman Catholic——"

Moreton (decisively). "God forbid!"

Whereupon Sir Thomas uttered an inarticulate sound, and the conversation turned partly upon the events of the day, as recorded in the columns of *The Times*, partly upon

the neighbourhood they had just left. At length the materials ran short, for limited was the common ground that contained them. Sir Thomas again spread out *The Times*, and put on a pair of those glasses which are popularly known as nose-riders, Lady Alicia fell asleep over an elaborate description of a new stitch in *The Queen*, and Moreton began soliloquizing mentally as follows :—

“ What am I to think about this business ? Is she a specious monomaniac ? or has she some indirect power over him in some way or other ? But how ? This is real life, and the inheritance of Hazeley a matter of law, prosaic and exact. And I can’t see what sort of power she can possibly have over him. It is true that he looked out of humour the other day, when he was asked about the place being haunted ; but then the reputation of having a haunted house is a thing that annoys many people, for it often becomes a serious inconvenience. Certainly he didn’t care about it just now ; on the contrary, he entered into it voluntarily, was quite at his ease, and—— ”

“ Isn’t this the church at Grumford Stoneway, that Miss Fitzbuggins has lately restored ? ” asked Sir Thomas Grubhedge.

"There it is, on the side of that hill, half a mile off."

And when Moreton replied that it was, which he did without thinking what he said, knowing, indeed, nothing of the church in question, Sir Thomas pointed it out to Lady Alicia, who was thereby reminded of a row about some candlesticks, and from that fruitful beginning passed on to many reminiscences of Exeter Hall eloquence on kindred subjects; Moreton in the mean while arriving at certain conclusions by a slow inductive process from the occurrences of the last few days. He saw that Sherborne was jealous of Count de Bergerac, and he also saw that the attentions paid by the former to Miss Arden were intended to balance appearances with reference to her sister, so as to gain time and opportunity. Thought he—

"I see now what it was that impressed the duties of friend and neighbour so strongly on his mind this morning—not that he is, strictly speaking, conscious of being otherwise than straightforward about it. He is certainly making a fool of himself. Can't he see that she, in the first place (saving her charity), hates the sight of him? But couldn't he have chosen any other time to speak to Sir Roger

than just when I was in the room, and could neither go nor stay without seeming to know what he had come for, so that I ran the risk of appearing in a false and invidious light—and before her, too? As if the twofold suspense of the next twelve months, with just enough of hope to keep me in that suspense, were not enough, but I must be dragged into a quasi-responsible knowledge of Sherborne's and De Bergerac's rivalry! ‘A plague o' both your houses! ’’

At that moment a sudden feeling of shame came over him, “and then he started like a guilty thing,” as if the involuntary quotation were an irreverence to the depth of his chivalrous love for Mary Arden. “And I can quote,” he said gravely to himself, “and care to distinguish between eccentricity and monomania at such a time.” Gradually he perceived that this kind of self-reproach involved the alternative of excluding all thoughts but one till a year, perhaps more, had passed; and he felt angry with himself now for thinking nonsense in what referred to her. Then, as if he were doomed to be tormented with unwelcome quotations, he suddenly remembered the words of “Mademoiselle,” the French maid, in “The Provoked Wife:”—

“ Voilà un vrai Anglais ! Il est amoureux et cependant il veut raisonner. Va-t-en au diable.”

“ How irritating are the misplaced recollections of one’s rubbishy reading ! ” he said to himself, taking his rosary out of his pocket ; whereat Lady Alicia’s eyes expanded into blank rotundity, and Sir Thomas tried in a conspicuous manner to look unobservant. Soon after Moreton had finished saying his rosary the train stopped again, and the following duet immediately began, each voice in monotone :—

Tall porter (baritono sfogato). “ Muddleborough, Muddleborough, Muddleborough, Muddleborough.”

Newspaper boy (in childish treble). “ Times, Post, Telegraph, Daily Noos.”

Then the guard roared, as he passed the window, “ Wait ten minutes here ! ” and Sir Thomas Grubhedge roared, “ Hi—I say, porter ! ” “ Good-bye,” he added, turning to Moreton, as he got out of the carriage. “ If you come into my neighbourhood, I hope—Hallo ! mind that box : there’s glass in it. Good-bye.”

“ What does he say ? ” said Don Pascolini, speaking for the first time since the commencement of his journey.

“He hopes,” answered Moreton, “that if I happen to go into his neighbourhood I shall—Well, he left it to be implied that he should be happy to see me at his house. I can’t say whether he would enjoy my taking him at his word; but certainly he will never be put to the proof. Nothing would induce me to stay at his house. Do you stay much longer in England?”

“A few weeks. I want to make some extracts at the British Museum. Shall you be in London?”

“Only two days. I am going to Rome to volunteer into the Pontifical Zouaves.”

“You do well! it is a little army of heroes—true heroes.”

“Shall we have any fighting soon?”

Don Pascolini made no answer at the moment, but after a while he said—

“Adstiterunt reges terræ et principes convererunt in unum adversus Dominum, et adversus Christum ejus. The government at Florence covets Rome, as it coveted the rest of the Holy Father’s dominions, and is only restrained by its fear of France. I have full confidence in France fairly represented, but I remember Castel Fidardo.”

“I ought to have volunteered before,” said

Moreton, "for I passed the greater part of three years in Rome. To be sure, I was not a Catholic till just after Mentana; but still——"

"Mentana settled things for a while, and you were well employed," said Don Pascolini.

"Yes," said Moreton. "One has, indeed, much to learn, much to unlearn, and not a little to relearn with precision."

"Were you long making up your mind?"

"Some little time. During the first six months I went back instead of forward, and lost the inclination I had brought with me."

"Not an uncommon case. No one can remain spiritually stagnant in Rome; and unless you had some one to explain things, you would misapprehend what you saw."

"I had no one to do so. In fact, just the reverse. I saw everything, not as it was, but as it was not."

"What set you thinking?"

"Father Liberatore's treatise, 'Della Conoscenza Intellettuale,' and the quotations from St. Thomas, in the second volume. At that time I had not the remotest idea what true mental philosophy meant, and I stumbled on the book, as it were, by accident. It opened my eyes to the intellectual superiority of Catholic principles. Then I got hold of

Father Harper's 'Peace through the Truth,' which opened my eyes in another way. I was amazed at the falsifications it exposed. After that I read Mr. Allies' 'St. Peter: his Name and his Office,' which clearly showed me where the Church is to be found. I thought much and inquired much, and I was for some time under instruction. I was convinced, satisfied, all but conscious of—well, I will not say trifling with the grace of God, but at least of questioning it. So powerful were the early influences of home, and the associations of childhood, that I shrank from the inference, and dreaded the inquiry I had sought. During the last few weeks I was a prey to a hydra-headed scrupulosity that condemned every possible course of action; but I prayed hard at the time to know the truth. One day, as the Blessed Sacrament was being carried to a sick person's house, I fell on my knees, and felt at peace. That was the end of it. But I had a hard struggle while it lasted, and for a time the balance was terribly even. And that reminds me to ask if you saw Mrs. Atherstone again?"

"Yes, three days ago. When I went to her house, the day after our visit there, she asked me to come again, and I went."

“ What do you think about her ? ”

“ She has a fixed idea about the rights and chances of the unknown heir, but she is not mad. Fixed ideas are strange things : sometimes they are a very curious study.”

“ She spoke of having wished to be a Catholic when she was a girl, and from what she said, as we were coming away, I fancied that she had since, in spite of her violent protests during the course of her story.”

“ She was so eager about the property and the heir, and the whole story, that she spoke of nothing else. She evidently expected I should encourage her to hope for success, which, of course, I would not do.”

“ Perhaps, too, she had a dim idea of your having some occult power, by means of which you could help her, if you would. The popular Protestant idea of a priest in England, especially among people born in the last century, is very curious.”

“ I thought they supposed priests to be unscrupulous imposters, and nothing more. What do they take them to be ? ”

“ Imposters without free-will or scruples, but invested by the devil with a preternatural power, the more awful from being unknown. People feel that the Church has a power not

of this world, and, like the Jews, they attribute it to the devil. You will find even educated people holding this belief in a confused and uncertain sort of way ; and, as a rule, those who do so are among the most honest, who give an interior assent to what they were taught in their childhood. It is not so with the leaders of non-Catholic thought, nor with their rank and file : *their* no-Popery is, in a modified form, that of the Continental Liberals.”

“ Certainly she appeared to be offended and disappointed. I suppose she had some confused idea that I could do something for her if I would. I understand it now.”

At this moment the train entered a tunnel, and their conversation was suspended—who, indeed, can talk so as to be understood, or hear so as to understand, in a tunnel ? After it had come forth, roaring and whistling in a cloud of steam, they passed through some rich meadows ; and a little further on, at a curve of the railway, Ledchester Cathedral burst upon the view, towering in the majesty of perfect proportion above the roofs that were clustered around it.

“ Type of the faith ! ” thought Moreton. “ There it stands, as it has stood and will

stand, amid continued rising and rotting and falling away."

Recollections of his childhood came rolling in, one over the other, like ocean waves when the tide is low, each one in turn breaking up and dissolving into mist as it came in contact with the rugged facts of his life. They lasted but a few moments, those little impetuous sorrowful recollections of his; but certain it is that in this momentary glimpse into places familiar to his childhood, so intimately connected with his early, and, as yet, only home, intensely loved, passed away for ever, and associated with the hardest, the most painful struggle of his life, each suggestion of memory did break up into fragments as soon as it had proposed itself to his recognition.

"That is a magnificent cathedral. You know it well, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Moreton. "As a child and as a boy I often came into Ledchester, and generally went into the cathedral. The sight of it has set me remembering the sensations of awe and vague devotion with which I used to contemplate its massive pillars and its vistas of arches in shadow. I had the same sort of feeling about the old parish churches,

but, most of all, of the one at Fernham ; and I have no doubt it keeps people out of the Church even now—especially those who have local and hereditary associations in the country.”

“Even now ? ” echoed Don Pascolini. “ Is that feeling, then, less than it was ? ”

“I think,” said Moreton, “that the church restoration movement has helped, in its own way, to destroy in Anglicans the idea of antiquity as an attribute of the Establishment, and substitute a speculative restlessness for the dim local devotion of the people who sat in square pews. The square pews discoloured by damp, and sometimes gnawed by rats, had an indefinite look of age about them. Their ruinous condition softened their ugliness, and they were associated in people’s minds with the genuine antiquity of the pillars, arches, and mediæval brasses ; so that the whole building, and its furniture, including the notice not to marry one’s grandmother, had in many minds an apparent objectivity, dim, and of course unsatisfying, but real of its kind. This was the case some years ago ; and national changes are, or rather were, so slow in leavening the mass of people, that I can remember in a degree what I have

described. At the present time the church restoration movement is general, the spell of the unaltered buildings is broken, the religion of Anglicans essentially unsettled. And though, of course, Tractarianism and Ritualism on the one hand, false philosophy and bad literature on the other, have been the principal agents in working this change, yet, in my humble opinion, the removal of things that people were accustomed from their childhood to associate with the only religion they had ever known, has had a share in the work."

"A cause and also an effect, I, should imagine," said Don Pascolini. "People were unsettled, and one result was the impulse to restore churches : but then, the restorations, clashing with early habits and the best lessons of childhood, and being visibly inconsistent with the logic of facts, would also help, to a certain extent, in disenchanting them."

At that moment a sound of bumping and scraping heralded their arrival at Ledchester.

"I should like to see the cathedral ; it was stupid of me not to have thought of it," said Don Pascolini, as the train stopped. "But it cannot be now."

"And so should I," said Moreton. "I have not seen it since——"

"Ah! here is the carriage," said a voice at the door. "I went into another to smoke, and to get out of the way of the two greatest bores in England, old Grubhedge and his wife. Good-bye. I hope, Don Pascolini, that you will stop at Hazeley the next time you come this way. It is hardly four miles from Bramscote, where you could say Mass, and I could drive you there every morning in twenty minutes."

And, taking off his hat respectfully, Sherborne hurried away.

"Does he mean that, or is it only an empty compliment?" said Don Pascolini.

"There is a compromise in his mind, I think," said Moreton. "If you were to come into this country again, he would invite you, and do all he could to make your visit agreeable; but he had rather you would not come. Intellectually he would like it, but your office would embarrass him."

"I see that," said Don Pascolini. "He is unsettled, and afraid of the truth. But what impediments can he have? That is what puzzles me. From what I have heard him say at different times he seems to have no belief at all in the Establishment."

"None whatever," said Moreton. "I believe that conviction and inclination would lead him to be a Catholic ; and he is perfectly independent of the world—few men as independent of it."

"You English are certainly difficult to understand," said Don Pascolini. "What is it that keeps him back ? "

"He can't bear the idea of the temporal loss which it would entail," said Moreton.

"I thought all that was past——"

"Yes ; the confiscations, and fines, and double land tax, and legal disabilities. In the eyes of the law Catholics are on the same footing as other Englishmen, but in practice it is not so. Not only are they excluded from the House of Commons by the persistent resolution of the constituencies not to elect them, but in every way by which public feeling can use its enormous power of suppression they are civilly, and unapparently, and with much personal good-will, caused to remain in the background. Now, of all the many trials that have racked the endurance, tempted the just aspirations, stung the susceptibilities, and mocked the perseverance of English Catholics, through means positive and means negative, in ways direct and in

ways indirect, by public law and by collective obstruction, by sneaking violence and by solemn lying, from the days of Anna Boleyn to the present time, the exclusion from their rightful power and influence in the general and local self-government of the country, has been, perhaps, the most difficult of all to bear."

"I see. No doubt it is so; for the English are beyond all others a self-governing people."

"Precisely; and that this exclusion—having its source, its overflowing source, not in the temporary passions and interests which have produced the actual facts of repealable laws, but in the artificially vitiated instincts of a great nation, which owes all its true greatness to the Catholicity out of which it has been bullied and cheated—does, in fact, represent actual public opinion."

"No doubt you are right," said Don Pascolini, after some reflection. "No doubt you are right in what you said just now, that exclusion from the self-government of their country has been to Englishmen the most difficult of all to bear. Moral suppression has always been, no doubt is still, the most dangerous to your countrymen. Since I have been in

England I have been going over again, more carefully than I ever did before, your history for the past two hundred years, especially church history, and I was puzzled by the fact that men, whose forefathers had risked, year after year, daily, hourly, the dungeon, the gallows, and the quartering-knife, were, in the beginning of this century, ready to cringe before Parliament, and call themselves ‘Protesting Catholic Dissenters.’ ”

“The normal Englishman,” said Moreton, “is not, strictly speaking, ambitious; but he has an instinctive desire to find his own level. Adverse public feeling tempts an Englishman’s loyalty of purpose far more than unjust laws. Adverse public feeling is the latest form which the great anti-Catholic tradition has assumed in England. It enters into the every-day life of an English Catholic, and perhaps an English country gentleman more than others, with a civil obtrusiveness, an obstructive quietism, that impedes usefulness, and benumbs the energies. The silent significance of an invisible *vis inertiae*, which simply makes it impossible for English Catholics to be on equal terms with their countrymen, is not only an impediment to action, but, what is far worse, is to Catholics an insidious

sophism against effort in general. It develops latent indolence, takes the vigour out of emulation, and misleads prudence. You can imagine what an effect this must have on a possible convert."

"I can, indeed," said Don Pascolini; then he added, after a pause, "But I suppose it applies chiefly to converts. It can hardly now-a-days affect the position of (for instance) a man so much looked up to as Sir Roger Arden?"

"I am afraid it does, very considerably; and he would tell you the same himself; though, perhaps, 'being to the manner born,' he is not so constantly jarred by it as a convert is. I can only say that years ago, before I left England, and when I was still a Protestant, I felt the difference between the worldly position of the inhabitants of Bramscote and that of contemporary neighbours. I felt it, indeed, indistinctly, through a mist, without surprise or feeling of any sort—except, perhaps, a vague impression that it was a natural and, on the whole, harmonious condition of things, reconciling accomplished facts with some rather obtrusive sympathies, and enabling Blackstone's Commentaries to live peaceably on the same shelves with Kenelm Digby's

Compitum and Mores Cattolicæ. But now I feel it intelligibly; I feel it unconditionally, as one does a fact, not with an implied reserve, as I had felt it before, when it was only a supposition."

"What, then, is the difference between his worldly position and that of his neighbours? Sir Roger Arden is a man who is what people call 'very much respected.'"

"Certainly," replied Moreton, "he is the possessor, too, of a large and improving estate, which in the world's eyes is a good solid setting for moral jewellery. The difference between his position and that of his neighbours is this: theirs, like a good security, is worth its nominal value, whilst his undergoes a considerable depreciation when presented before public feeling to be converted into any practical result. The same may be said, *cæteris paribus*, of his own and his neighbours' personal qualities respectively. His are heavily discounted, theirs are fairly dealt with, according to the market value of the articles at the time and place. No Catholic, of whatever class or ability, can fail to perceive that the majority of his countrymen desire, consciously or unconsciously, to exclude him from the power of exercising his legitimate share of

influence, although they are not at all unwilling to give him the right of possessing it. Compare, for instance, the Emancipation Act with the fact that now, forty years after it became law, there is not one Catholic member of parliament returned by an English constituency."

"Ah! yes, that is an instance of——"

But at this moment they were arriving at another station; and two fat men, with travelling caps on their heads, got into the carriage, each carrying a carpet bag and the last number of *The Mining Journal*.

CHAPTER IV.

*σταθεῖς ἄκουσον· καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ τὸν πάρος
μῆθον μάτην ἤκουσας, οὐδὲ νῦν δοκῶ.*

SOPH., *Trach.*

Two days afterwards Moreton left England, and England went on the same as usual. Then six months passed, and people poured into London by all the railways, till the thoroughfares were congested, and the smaller houses grew stifling. All the Ardens, except the two sons, were in town.

And Sherborne was in town—very much in town. He was going about very much, deliberating very much, making up his mind very much, worried by the cravings of an infirm ambition very much, making a dignified fool of himself very much, in respect of Miss Winifred Arden. His life, up to the present time—and he was now forty-five, had, in spite of personal and worldly advantage, been a

failure, and one of the least remediable kind, a negative failure. A break-down in any serious attempt would probably have been the making of him ; his little desultory successes in articles and after-dinner speeches, combined with a morbidly critical habit of mind, had developed in him a procrastinating self-confidence which, added to a versatile quickness of intellect, and a sort of idle vigour that enjoyed the consciousness, but shrank from the trouble of labour, was fatal to effort, fatal to any real work whatever.

He was aware of all this, but he also knew that the defects had been acquired, or at any rate made worse ; and so he had hitherto contented himself with laying the blame on Sir Thomas Grubhedge. Now however he was suffering from an acute attack of anxiety to make up for lost time, and do something. If Miss Winifred Arden had unconsciously inspired him with this desire to “be a hero in the strife” of politics or literature, no less unconsciously did she cause him to hesitate as to the very first step-taking a line ; for well he knew that he must be a Catholic if he hoped for the remotest chance of winning her, and must not be, if he wanted to succeed in the world. Yet there he was, evening after

evening, trying her patience and exercising her charity by his unacceptable attentions, in ball-rooms, or staircases, in window-entrances to flowered balconies, in corners of inner drawing-rooms, in supper-rooms and cloak-rooms, in entrance-halls when carriages “stopped the way,” and on the church steps in Farm Street, where the dresses of some Catholic ladies, tremendous in appearance and cost, were disfiguring their wearers, and increasing the misapprehensions of Protestants.

During the first three weeks his little game had a kind of subjective success; he had forced himself to feel satisfied with not having been snubbed by her, and no one had accused him of Popish proclivities.

It is true that the appearance of Lady Fyfield in society had, on more occasions than one, given him that sort of sensation which is popularly called “a turn;” for his heart had never really lost its early impression, and he could not deceive himself in comfort when she was present. But then the rooms were generally crowded, and she left them early whenever she entered them, which she seldom did.

Very seldom—not more than twice in those

three weeks, once at a dinner at Sir Roger's, and once at an evening party, where she remained rather less than half an hour; but at length he found her at a ball—on the staircase, too, and looking at him as a woman *can* look when she means a man to seem small in his own sight. He turned away, and was afraid that other people would observe that look; but other people were busy with their own little games, nor had they the help of his conscience to read it by.

Then he made his way up to Miss Winifred Arden, who was at the end of the farthest room, and glancing nervously from time to time in the direction of Lady Fyfield, tried his best, "did all he knew," to make himself agreeable. She tolerated him for two reasons: because his conversational powers were much above the average, and because she was not clearly aware of what was in his mind concerning herself. She tolerated him, but with an instinctive reservation unrecognized by herself. He had been talking to her ten minutes, more or less, and was beginning to feel theoretically satisfied with his chances, when he was quietly displaced by the sweep of a lady's dress. The wearer of that dress evidently meant mischief.

"Let me introduce you," said a voice,
"to—"

The rest was unintelligible ; but not so the result. Miss Winifred Arden left the room to dance the Lancers, and Lady Fyfield stood by him, looking as she had looked before. When the music began and voices grew louder around, she said to him, speaking in a low clear voice over her fan—

"I am sorry to see a neighbour in a false position."

She was apparently passing on when Sherborne, who was too much confused to see that the distance between them did not increase by half a yard, walked after her, and stammered out—

"Stay—what do you mean ? I can't imagine. Who ? "

It was the word "neighbour" judiciously emphasized that finished what the stiff sweep of the dress and the immediate disappearance of Winifred Arden had begun. He had been symbolically swept out, and then classed generically as a neighbour. When people are in a disagreeable position anywhere they generally desire to be somewhere else ; but sometimes that ideal effort at self-extrication collapses ; and Sherborne, for the first time in

his life, had experience of such a collapse. He had borne the sweep out with equanimity, for it was remediable ; and he had even felt, in the most secret corner of his heart, a little pleasant flutter at the thought that, after all, it was his first love who thus “ upon malicious bravery came to start his quiet ” : but when she calmly classed him as a neighbour, just as if he were Mr. Glenfillan Bruff, or Mr. Linus Jones, and gave him to understand that this term was his only claim to be pitied by her for having made a fool of himself, he lost his presence of mind utterly, and stammered out incoherent questions.

Lady Fyfield looked towards, but not at him, and disposed herself either to hear his answer, or to seem no longer unaware of his presence.

“ How—what—I—” said Sherborne ; and that was all he could say. Yet he was not wont to be at a loss for words.

“ In the first place by trying for things which are incompatible,” said she, without turning her head or softening the icy coldness of her manner.

“ And what besides ? ” he said, not knowing what else to say.

“ You are acting against your conscience

and against your interest as well," she replied.

He tried to smile away the truth of the statement, but only brought upon himself this addition—

"To speak more plainly, your conduct is dishonest, and it will not answer."

Then he raised his eyes nervously, afraid to meet hers, but anxious to see what they expressed. He lowered them again without delay, made two or three attempts at a general defence of himself, and said—

"Well, but I don't understand. Will you explain how?"

She replied, "I will. I meant to do so."

Then she glided away from the crowd into a little secluded boudoir, he following; and when they were so placed that she could be seen, but not overheard, the dialogue began thus:—

Lady Fyfield. "You want to do something in the world—to make your mark in public life; and you are the more anxious to do your utmost at once, because you begin late. No doubt you are right, according to your own measure of what things are worth. You aim in that direction which is suitable to English abilities, habits, and traditional customs; you aim high, and you have every qualification, except perseverance and fixed

principles. You would have the courage of your convictions if you had any political convictions to have the courage of, and perhaps the want of them will, in these times, be an advantage to you, so long as you conceal the want."

Sherborne. "I congratulate you on your success in ironical encouragement. The checks upon each expression of your opinion are so——"

Lady Fyfield. "I want you to listen—not to congratulate."

Sherborne. "——judiciously applied, that, if I were not well aware of my own deficiencies I should be unable to strike a balance. If I were younger and more sanguine—if I had a better opinion of myself than I have or ought to have, and more confidence in untested predictions, I should be in a flutter of spasmodic elation; but as it is, I can only think of what is discouraging and——"

Lady Fyfield. "Somebody will come and talk to one of us directly. I have little to say, but that little is important, and I have not said it yet."

Sherborne. "One word only first. I have great confidence in a woman's perceptive foresight, and most of all in yours——"

Lady Fyfield. "That will do now. I must say what I——"

Sherborne. "And all the deficiencies you name are enough to discourage——"

Lady Fyfield. "I will wait no longer. You fancy that you have fallen in love with Winifred Arden——"

Sherborne. "What could have——?"

Lady Fyfield. "And in order to try for what you never will obtain——"

Sherborne. "Very likely."

Lady Fyfield. "——under any circumstances that can possibly occur——"

Sherborne. "Why under any? "

Lady Fyfield. "(You shall hear that afterwards)—you are throwing away your worldly chances on the one hand, and risking your soul on the other. You know very well that you cannot be a Catholic and a member for the county. You know very well that a Catholic will not be elected by any English constituency now, and in any case cannot rise beyond the details of the General Post Office; and yet you are putting in an appearance of incipient Catholicity for the purpose of deceiving Sir Roger, who——"

Sherborne. "What can you mean?"

Lady Fyfield. "——is too honest and

simple-minded to suspect what you are at. As to your marrying Winifred, it is out of the question. In the first place, I am almost sure that she is engaged to a man who has been for two years devoted to her."

Sherborne. "Well, if Sir Roger knew about that Count de——"

Lady Fyfield. "He knows what you told him."

Sherborne. "I?"

Lady Fyfield. "Yes. Don't pretend you didn't. You told Sir Roger the morning the party broke up at Bramscote; and he was in such a state of mind, that he rode over to Dredgemere at once to ask me about it, because I had introduced Count de Bergerac to them. I asked him how he had heard this ridiculous story. He tried to avoid telling me, said he was not at liberty to tell, and the rest; but, of course, I——"

Sherborne (aside and involuntarily). "Trust a woman to worm out of——"

Lady Fyfield. "——I asked him if he had promised not to tell. He admitted that he had not. I said that as he had not promised to keep it secret, he was bound to give his authority, in justice to Count de Bergerac, and to the friends abroad at whose houses he met

him. (*Aside*) Good gracious! there is that Mr. Crayston trying to get through the crowd."

Sherborne (aside). "No such luck! (*Aloud*) He is off tuft-hunting, as the manner of Radicals is. Well, if you *must* know, it was he who told me all about Count de Bergerac; and he will tell you, if you like to ask him, for he only repeats what he was told. He repeated it because he heard it from people whose word he supposed he could depend on, and who know all the circumstances."

Lady Fyfield. "Nonsense."

Sherborne. "Then you have proof that the accusation is false?"

Lady Fyfield. "I wonder you are not ashamed of asking such a question. Do you suppose that people go about with written certificates in their pockets to show that they are not thieves? It is simply that I believe him to be incapable of any such acts as those imputed to him. I am a pretty fair judge of character and countenance, they say. But, however that may be——"

Sherborne. "Well, at all events, I think it rather hard that I should be accused of deception because I did what I really couldn't avoid doing without real treachery to a friend and neighbour."

Lady Fyfield. “The friendliness of the act would be more apparent if you had no personal interest in doing it. But let that pass ; and suppose, if it so pleases you, that you have a chance of being accepted by her. I tell you that you haven’t ; but you think you have, or try to think so, and common sense tells you that you must face the meaning of your own wishes. Now, you know as well as I do that she wouldn’t marry a Protestant——”

Sherborne. “I don’t know.”

Lady Fyfield. “You *do* know.”

Sherborne. “I mean that I don’t quite see.”

Lady Fyfield. “Don’t tell such a wicked story. You know perfectly well, for you said so to me, over and over again, years ago, after Sir Thomas’s first wife, who was my aunt, had died, and when (before he met Lady Alicia) he wanted to marry one of the Ardens, a cousin of Sir Roger’s—you said then—— Now don’t begin to look sentimental, and pretend to care about what you felt or imagined *two and twenty years* ago. All *that* is past and gone : and we are talking of Winifred Arden. You said then, that you were sure none of that family would agree to a mixed marriage ; and you remember, no doubt, better than I can

tell you, the reasons you gave, and why you, as well as I, considered a mixed marriage to be bad in principle and in practice. I won't explain to you what you know very well yourself."

Sherborne. "But listen——"

Lady Fyfield. "No, I won't; and there is that man again coming this way."

Sherborne (aside). "Oh! I wish he *would* come."

Lady Fyfield. "If you wish and expect to marry her you must become a Catholic; but then you must give up all hopes of competing with Protestants for success in public life. You can't do both. I once thought—and I clung to the delusion long after I ought to have known better—that you were in earnest when you rode over to Dredgemere two or three times a week last autumn, and stayed half the afternoon talking of religion. I ought to have seen that if you *had* been in earnest, you would have gone to the nearest priest."

Sherborne. "How could you expect me to forget the influence you——"

Lady Fyfield. "Stop now!"

Sherborne. "Oh! don't say——"

Lady Fyfield. "If you say any more I will

tell Winifred and Sir Roger ; and so I will if you don't listen to every word I have to say. I say that either you professed what you didn't mean, or, meant it, and went back for the sake of the world. If you professed what you didn't mean, I can only hope and pray that you were not aware of what you were doing ; but, if you meant it, and went back—oh ! as you value your soul, your salvation, consider what it is what you did—what it is that you are persisting in.”

Sherborne. “ I do—indeed I do. But one wants time.”

Lady Fyfield. “ You don't want time. You are letting the time pass. You want the will. Take care ! ”

Sherborne. “ Then you don't advise me to work ? ”

Lady Fyfield. “ Don't twist one's words in that quibbling way. I never said anything of the kind ; and it isn't work, but the world's rewards of work, that you are thinking of all the time.”

Sherborne. “ I don't see what you are aiming at. You began as if you were advising me to go in for public life, and now you imply that I shall risk my salvation if I don't do what would be a bar to success in it.”

Lady Fyfield. “ I said that you have many qualifications for public life. I said that, according to your own measure of what things are worth (and I judged of that measure by your actions) you would do well to choose that life, as the highest order of effort you were capable of. But I also said that, in my opinion—and I earnestly pray that I am mistaken—you were letting your convictions give way to your ambition, and, at the same time, trying for that which would necessitate your placing an insuperable obstacle between yourself and its object. If I could have believed you to be invincibly ignorant, I should have held my tongue, left your romantic delusion to the practical remedy of Winifred’s distinct refusal, and wished you success in your career. Properly speaking, it is no concern of mine, and I have put myself in a very disagreeable position by interfering—— ”

Sherborne. “ How can it—— ”

Lady Fyfield. “ There, that will do now. If I could have believed you to be invincibly ignorant, I should have been but too glad to let Winifred undeceive you about herself, and your own ability lead you to success in a career for which you are suited. But I don’t believe you to be so, and therefore I deter-

mined to speak. Oh! if the grace of God *has* enlightened your understanding ever so little, do not reject it. If you receive the gift of faith, and trifle with it, He may take it from you. It is an awful thing to trifle with His grace. What will the world and its honours, if you had them all, profit you then? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? You once promised me—it was on the terrace at——”

Sherborne. “Oh, don’t! The misery of that early disappointment——”

Lady Fyfield. “You promised——”

Sherborne. “It has been the ruin of me.”

Lady Fyfield. “You promised that if ever I saw you acting against your conscience, and reminded you of that evening, you would attend to my words. I claim that promise now.”

The last notes of the Lancers had ceased, and both the Miss Ardens, with their partners, were seen approaching. Lady Fyfield went forward to meet them, saying as she moved away—

“I promised Sir Roger to chaperone them the rest of the evening: he wanted to go home. Mind! I claim your promise—a pro-

mise made deliberately and unasked. Now, don't come here!"

The last words were spoken whilst the Miss Ardens were just coming within earshot; and she turned from him as she had done before, when introducing the indistinct young dancing man to the youngest. She had swept him out again.

He wandered away, avoiding acquaintances, and at length found himself in a flowered balcony, his eyes fixed on the scene below, as if he were looking at the two lines of carriages that stood round the square, and the carriages that set down, and the carriages that took up, and the footmen with their canes, and the cads with their lanterns, and the men and women who had got in the way, and the policemen who got them out of the way, and the carriage-lamps all about, that most resembled glow-worms hovering and flying in mid-air. But he saw none of these things, though he seemed to stare at them. He was trying to examine himself.

The process of self-examination puzzled him not a little, and the fact of being puzzled, puzzled him still more. "Have I not," thought he, as the difficulty became apparent, "been much given to examining

myself—too much, perhaps?" — the truth being that he had never examined himself in his life, but only wasted his time at intervals in the morbid amusement of introspection, by which he had acquired a fictitious self-knowledge that only led him astray. And so he went on trying to find out whether his feelings with regard to Miss Winifred Arden were what he supposed them to be, and not a fiction of fancy strengthened by opposition ; whether he had ever lost his early love for Lady Fyfield ; whether it was possible to reconcile the co-existence of a real and a fictitious attachment, on the hypothesis that he had brooded over his blighted youth till the line between past and present had become obliterated, and an almost feminine jealousy had warped his will ; whether he had had the gift of faith, and been unfaithful to it because that same jealousy had taken the form of passionate worldliness as well as that of a fictitious attachment.

These questions, which, by the bye, suggested themselves without much co-operation of his own will, startled his memory. He was unable to feel convinced that they were quite new to him.

Leaning over the stone balustrade of the

flowered balcony, he pushed aside the awning in front, and, turning his eyes from time to time towards the ball-room, he argued with himself, for and against—especially against—these suggestions, weighing his own arguments nervously, while Coote and Tinney's band played a waltz. The waltz music of the period, in combination with lights, ball-dresses, flowers, and collective attraction of beautiful women, is certainly not conducive to distinctness of feeling and purpose; and Sherborne realized the fact. Perhaps, if every man knew his own history, and told the truth, we should find that collective fascination, indefinite, indirect, hypothetical, favoured by circumstances, can and does muddle the feelings and purposes of not a few.

“It is nothing but the memory of feelings chilled by her own coldness,” he said to himself at length. “Yes; chilled years ago, when she married Sir Bertram within three months of the day on which our engagement was broken off—chilled to death when, meeting her again free—for he died two years before I came to Hazeley—I found her changed.”

The waltz had ended, and two or three couples came into the flowered balcony. He turned away in haste, repeating “Chilled to

death, chilled to death ; and there is an end of it. It must have been the effect of looking on at the ball. I have been day-dreaming backwards ; but it won't happen again."

Crayston was hovering about in the distance, ready for tuft-hunting or advanced liberalism, but preferring the two combined. Sherborne sought him ; it was but the second time that he had done so over a period of twenty years, the first being on the occasion of the ball at Bramscote just after the Count de Bergerac's departure for Rome. He sought him tortuously, seeming to meet him by accident, and soliloquizing rapidly as he went.

" It must have been the effect of looking on at the ball. I have been day-dreaming backwards—but it won't happen again," was the burden of his soliloquy half-way round the ball-room, and then he went on thus : " If the grace of God has enlightened my understanding *ever so little* ! Why, her own words are the best defence—in fact, *the* defence of my conduct. If a man makes use of the light he has, he does all that God expects from him. It isn't his fault if the light is limited. I needn't connect myself so exclusively with a set—with what isn't exactly, but *seems* to a lot of people who can elbow one out—and that comes to

the same thing in effect—seems a thing which had grown out of practical remembrance. So it has, too, and become a sort of ‘handwriting on the wall’—so it has too. Well, I can’t help it. One can’t always do just as one would like : one can help it on by giving way judiciously. The reed bends, but remains rooted in the ground ; and so can I bend to the public prejudice, which would take the means of usefulness from me if I did not, and yet be at heart a Catholic ; and— Why can’t they let a fellow be received into the Church, and pretend to go on believing in the Establishment for a while ? Didn’t Eleazar, or Naaman, or somebody, bow down in the house of Rimmon, and it was all right ? That is the way I see it, and God will not expect any one to see farther than He gives him light to see.”

As he finished this redoubtable string of sophisms, that would not deceive a Catholic child, but can and do deceive at the present time many grown-up Protestants, clever, highly educated, and laborious, he reached the spot where Crayston was.

“Are you quite sure about that story ? ” said he. “One doesn’t like to believe such a thing against a man if one can help it.”

" You mean that Count de Bergerac ? " said Crayston in a careless tone.

" Yes—you told me—— "

" Oh ! as to that, you may make yourself satisfied."

" That it isn't true ? "

" That it *is* true, of course."

" It's no satisfaction to me to know that the story is true," said Sherborne, suddenly perceiving a friend near, and moving towards him, adding mentally, " I am not so uncharitable as to wish that the story may be true. If it is, I can't help it."

After the shortest of conversations with the opportune friend, he began to go away gradually ; for it clearly appeared to him that he would look foolish if he remained there excluded from the presence of Miss Winifred Arden, and still more foolish if he encountered the consequences of disregarding Lady Fyfield's brief but significant admonition, " Now, don't come here." To attempt resistance in such a case one must be more than a man—or less. It seemed a pity, from his own point of view, that the necessity should occur then, rather than on some average occasion ; for in that house any man who desired to avoid the imputation of Popish

proclivities, whilst otherwise putting in an appearance of the same, should carefully endeavour to be seen simultaneously with those appearances. The master of the house, Lord Ledchester, his distant neighbour, was an Anglican of the aristocratico-national school, a rich peer with a short pedigree lengthened collaterally by marriages, a stanch supporter of all ideas obstructive to Catholics, and a man of heavy personal influence. He always went with the leader of his party, except when Mr. Disraeli talked about concurrent endowment ; he proposed the toast of "Church and State," with appropriate remarks against Popery and Romanizing practices, whenever he had a chance of doing so ; and converts were his favourite subject of aversion. Probable converts he looked upon as people sickening with a virulent and mentally contagious disease.

It was a useful house for Sherborne to be seen at, but he had to go away.

On his way down the crowded staircase he found himself close to his neighbour, Mr. Glenfillan Bruff, the optimistic squarson, who tried to detain him in conversation about the expected vacancy for the county ; and no sooner had he succeeded in getting away

without disclosing his intention of standing, than he heard some one just behind, and the sound made him hurry so much, that he tore three flounces and trod on the toes of a Portuguese *attaché*. It was the irrepressible Miss Hermione.

"To come here and meet all one's neighbours and all their relations, and have them staring and spying!" said he to himself. "I shall see Mrs. Linus Jones directly."

Which he did before he reached the cloak-room.

"Is he going to put up his eldest son for the county," thought Sherborne, "that he asks every one in this way?"

"Are you off so early?" said Sir Roger Arden, who was going into the cloak-room as Sherborne came out.

"Yes; there is a great crowd, and my room will be better than my company," said Sherborne.

"No, no," said Sir Roger.

Sherborne smiled ambiguously, and answered, "Don't forget that I am to drive you all down to Ascot next Thursday."

And that was the end of the ball as far as Sherborne was concerned.

CHAPTER V.

“ Begone, cares, doubts, and fears,
I make you all a present to the winds ;
And if the winds reject you—try the waves.”

SHERIDAN, *The Critic*.

If Sherborne did not think about his own private affairs exactly in the words of Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, at least his thoughts resulted in the same kind of sentiment when he rode into Rotten Row next morning. Inclinations had pressed powerfully on a will that had no resting point, misgivings had disappeared like the typical policeman of a Christmas pantomime—when they were much wanted, and the pride of life had its own way pleasantly.

It is wont to do so when the man who embodies it can ride well, and is well mounted; for never, perhaps, is the sense of vital energy stronger, hope more sanguine, pursuit of happiness more active in the imagination, consciousness of power less limited. Sher-

borne rode a bright chestnut, whose shape and action were comparatively perfect, and whose fractious temper was just manageable by a very fine hand. If we were to say that here was the sublimity of danger without its matter-of-fact inconveniences, the idea would be commonly considered unhealthy, and savouring of La Rochefoucauld; so we will not say it, but it is true, nevertheless, and it occurred to Sherborne slightly altered, thus:—

“How the combined sensation of risk and power *does* brace one’s confidence in one’s chances of success!”

True enough; and how much of the world’s heroism is made up of that pleasant mixture, which may be better described as the excitement of danger without the personal realization of what it suggests!

It was a warm and very genial morning of early summer; there was no excess of heat, no treacherous chill of lengthened spring.

“It is just the day,” felt Sherborne, “when impressions are distinct.” He might have added, “and highly coloured,” but he did not.

Presently he met Sir Roger and Miss Winifred Arden, and if encouragement on her part was conspicuously absent, as it certainly

was, the chestnut claimed his attention just enough to break the chain of the evidence.

"So we are going to have you for a member?" said Sir Roger.

"Well, I don't know," answered Sherborne. "I have been asked to stand, but——"

"It seems to me that you have every chance."

"It won't be so easy if I have to contend against the purse and heavy influence of that old puritan——"

"Lord Ledchester? What—for his son?"

"Yes; that fellow with flaxen hair and a cut-off chin."

"If they start two Conservatives they won't get in one."

"Very likely. But what does he care about that, so long as he can keep *me* out?"

Sir Roger looked as if a little further information would enable him to render a more appreciative assent.

Sherborne hesitated, at least exteriorly, and added this explanation: "Because he considers me what they call a Jesuit in disguise."

Sir Roger smiled conditionally, and waited to hear more. The lady did neither. She raised her eyes once, just for an instant; and if Sherborne had only seen them!—

She turned away her head; her cheek flushed; her fingers fidgeted over her horse's mane.

"People have called me that a long time," said Sherborne. "And I don't know that I have a right to blame them, considering what *they* mean by the term."

The lady leaned forward and patted her horse's neck with significant emphasis.

"I know they use the term in all sorts of ways," said Sir Roger. "The Italian Liberals call every man a Jesuit who isn't one of themselves—and every woman, too, for the matter of that."

"And English Protestants have a meaning of their own for it," said Sherborne.

"Well, I suppose," answered Sir Roger, when a prolonged silence had caused him to feel that he must say something—"I suppose there are some people who would extend the meaning to——" Here he hesitated, stammered, and looked about, making desperate efforts to imagine what those persons unknown would say on the subject in question.

"To every one who deceives himself and other people, as far as he can, by double-dealing and dishonesty of purpose," said Winifred Arden.

Her voice trembled in a way that boded no good to Sherborne. It said, as plainly as tones could interpret words, “I can’t bear you! Saving charity, I hate you! *Do* go away!”

But fortunately, or otherwise, it happened that, just as she spoke, the chestnut shied at a perambulator which a stout nursery-maid was erratically propelling across the ride.

“I beg your pardon,” said Sherborne, “for my horse’s rudeness, which prevented my hearing what you said.”

“Only a truism which it is as well, perhaps, not to repeat,” said she, looking down fixedly along the outline of her nose, as women are wont to do when attentions are unwelcome.

“You excite my curiosity,” said Sherborne, looking rather anxious, but not disheartened. He was unaccountably blind to evidence just then.

“I think I see what you mean,” said Sir Roger, who had his own reasons—honest, well-meant reasons, yet unwise withal, for not wishing him to be decisively snubbed. “You mean that they apply the term to—— Yes, I see exactly.”

If he did, which is much to be doubted, it was more than could be said for Sherborne

himself, who for the last ten minutes had been trying hard to evoke out of his inner consciousness some intelligible account of his own religious position, for the benefit of those whom he wished it to concern. There was an awkward silence now, whilst he was making a final effort at definition ; and at length, being unable to endure the suspense any longer,—who could, with the lady looking down the outline of her nose, and her father looking blandly inquiring ?—he said—

“ Well, the truth is, it was not the people who rant about Jesuits that I was referring to, but much more numerous and important representatives of England — misinformed, hard-headed people, trained in the vast no-Popery tradition, bound by the unwritten law of its powerful prejudices—— ”

He broke off suddenly, and appeared to be thinking. Sir Roger nodded his assent to the fact that the people described were real and numerous. The young lady raised her eyes for an instant almost pettishly, and lowered them again at the same angle as before.

“ These people,” said Sherborne, “ don’t exactly call me a Jesuit, of course—they are not such fools ; but they say that of me which will in all probability lose me the election.

They are very sharp: they have a kind of intuitive prescience about—about conversions—sometimes almost before the person has—what shall I say?—formally decided."

"What can I answer to this without committing myself, or seeming indifferent?" felt Sir Roger.

"What can I add to this without spoiling it?" thought Sherborne, instinctively closing his heels, whereat the chestnut gave three or four vigorous plunges.

"Your horse has formally decided that he must have a gallop," said Winifred with an asperity of voice and manner that startled both her hearers.

"I think he has," answered Sherborne, trying to smile naturally; "and he will make your horse fidgety if I stay here."

"I suppose she was only in fun; he doesn't seem to mind," thought Sir Roger.

"I suppose I oughtn't to expect anything else at present," thought Sherborne, as the chestnut broke into a gallop, and began to pull in good earnest.

"And," thought Sir Roger, "I shouldn't wish him to be put aside; for he really *is* on the right road, almost decided—he said so himself just now—one *must* give him a little

time. And that's a bad business, that story of Crayston's, whatever Lady Fyfield may say. And though Sherborne is a good deal older than Winifred, why, if he comes right in religion, as he is doing evidently, and if she should happen to alter her mind about him (not that I would ever try at all to persuade her), why, in that case it would be very pleasant to have her living so near," etc., etc., etc.

Fiddlededee, Sir Roger !

CHAPTER VI.

“ I am not sick, yet more than dead. I have a burning fever in my mind, and long for that which, having, would destroy me.”—BEN JONSON, *Every Man in His Humour*.

“ AH ! that is just what I thought,” soliloquized Sir Roger tacitly, in the tranquil recesses of his own honest, unsuspecting mind, as he was going to Mass next morning. “ That is just what it is. It seems to me like that—only he put it so well and clearly. ‘ They have a kind of intuitive prescience about conversions ’—that was a delicate way of describing his own conversion—‘ sometimes almost before the person ’ (meaning himself) ‘ has formally decided.’ And there he is——”

Yes, there he was, and there he had no business to be ; for he was there under false pretences—false to Sir Roger, false to himself. There he was, walking in, as ill-at-ease as an inexperienced pickpocket under the eye of the police. There he was, after he had walked in, kneeling over a brand-new *Garden of the Soul*,

and looking round stealthily, from time to time—now at Winifred Arden to see whether she was aware of his piety, now at one of the well-used confessionals, wishing that it were possible to have the comforts of Catholicity without the drawback of its demands. There he was, after Mass, walking out just behind Sir Roger, wanting to show himself, but afraid to face the lady on whose account he had come. There he was, on the church steps, hesitating, moving a step forward and half a step back, ashamed of seeming to avoid them, ashamed of coming forward.

There he was, and there he had no business to be. He knew it, and he felt that she knew it, and he was cowed.

Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all, even in love-making ; and it is well, so far, when there is a conscience to do so.

He went home, ran through the *Times* and county newspapers, read a heap of letters, and then, muttering, “One breakfasts better at a club,” hurried away accordingly.

Whether the breakfast was better or worse does not appear ; but whilst he was sitting at the little square table, with its little square table-cloth and brown tea-pot, one of those men whose social position depends on obtain-

ing the earliest news, private and public, said, in a low voice to somebody—

“ He saw him coming out of Farm Street ; and not merely on a Sunday, for the music and all that, but at half-past eight in the morning.”

And the other said, “ Ah ! if it were heard of in—— ”

And some one else, nudging the speaker, said, “ Why there he is, two tables off ! ”

But then, on the other hand, there was a hopeful letter before him from an electioneering agent at Ledchester ; and Lord Oxborough, who read the *St. James's Chronicle*, and used to make speeches against the Papal Aggression, had promised him his support ; whilst Sir Roger Arden had evidently been impressed with those words of suggestive import, “ sometimes almost before the person has formally decided ; ” so that, on the whole, he was inclined to say of what he had overheard—“ Is that all ? ”

In this frame of mind he arrived, about five o'clock, at an afternoon reception, where, meeting Lady Fyfield, he sat down beside her, and began to talk, opening the conversation with the following bit of social criticism :—

“ There is too much of this London business.”

"What kind of business?" asked Lady Fyfield.

"Ah! yes—I forgot," he said, laughing in a joyless sort of way. "I was answering my own thoughts. I was moralizing, which, I suppose is, after all, an idle employment."

"But what is the business," said she.

"That is just what I can't make out; but they make a great business of it."

"I dare say they do; but who are they?"

"I was thinking about the enormous size of London, the congested condition of society in it; the number of people who expend their energy and resources in a sustained endeavour to be something of much less importance than they naturally are at home."

"What is he driving at?" thought Lady Fyfield, only she thought it in more ladylike terms.

"It amounts to a truism by this time," he said; "but then, every fact, that has been a fact long enough to be important, is a truism when one mentions it. I wonder what put the subject into my head. Oh! it was Louis Veuillot's 'Odeurs de Paris,' which Crayston, of all unlikely men, lent me."

"People of that sort will often do so," said Lady Fyfield parenthetically. "It suits them

to patronize the truth sometimes, the better to deceive.”

“ You would suspect him of lending the book for the sake of that opportunity ? ”

“ Yes ; and especially if he praised it.”

“ Ah ! that is a really profound remark.”

“ Nothing of the sort ; it is only a truism that any one may know who has any observation at all. But what is the passage in ‘ Les Odeurs de Paris ’ ? I read the book when it came out.”

“ It is where he says—I can’t remember the words exactly—that when a gentleman runs away from his duties of property to drive about Paris, and help to support trumpery or dishonourable trades, he abdicates his position, or deserts it, or is kicked out.”*

“ I remember the passage ; but do you think that the warning applies to England as yet ? ”

“ I think it does, and more than appears at first sight. Because the London shopkeepers live a few miles out of London now-a-days, and the bankers and merchants keep hunters at

* “ Le gentilhomme n’avait pas ses grands biens pour tripotter en carosse les boues de Paris, et enrichir les industries frivoles ou malhonnêtes. Du moment qu’il abandonne sa fonction, il abdique la situation, ou il déserte, ou il se fait chasser.”—LOCIS VEUILLOT, *Les Odeurs de Paris*.

Weedon, or some other place within easy reach of an express train, and because square houses, with a garden, a wagonette, and a perambulator, abound in the neighbourhood of railway stations, people imagine that the love of country life is on the increase. It never occurs to those comfortable optimists that all this is not country life at all, but only country air, country exercise, country amusements—at the most, country pursuits in a very limited sense. There is much getting out of London, much country inhabitation, a great deal of sporting *villegiatura*, an enormous amount of air-hunting and dwelling with the picturesque ; but all that is not country life : it is buying or hiring the quiet, the beauty, the amusements, the atmospheric advantages of the country. Living in the country, and country life, present two distinct ideas. By country life I mean the passing one's time in a country locality whence one's income is, at least, mainly derived, where the local interests are one's own special interests, where one has a legitimate power and influence derived from one's local position, where one has a personal knowledge of the peasantry, and where they regard one, on the whole, with confidence and goodwill. That is what I mean by country life in

the upper classes, and that is what Veuillot's remarks apply to in England. Every English landed proprietor who deserts his post, tears a link from the traditions of the past, and pulls a stone from the supports of society."

"Very true; but do you think," said Lady Fyfield, "that there is much of this in England? I have been little in London of late, and little out of —shire, except when I was abroad, so that I can hardly give an opinion."

"No, not much at present," he replied; "and that is just why I am afraid of it. If it were done on a larger scale, and more distinctly, people would take fright; but, as it is, they just notice the few glaring instances, and see no farther."

"What are the glaring instances?"

"Letting one's place, and living in London, or abroad, or in watering-places. People can see those where they occur, in scattered cases that don't come before them as a whole. But there is a semi-absenteeism which is becoming, if it has not already become, an institution."

"You mean the coming and going on one short visit after another; the staying at home while a shooting party is there, then steaming off to a ball three or four counties away, then

up to London to hear a new play, or because there is a frost ; the filling one's house with people from the four quarters, and going away when it is empty ; neglecting one's country neighbours, who ought to have the first claim on one's hospitality and friendliness, and running about to every music meeting, dog show, and exhibition of every kind, spending money everywhere, and never stopping to repose or to think."

" Yes, that is just what I do mean. I feel very strongly on the subject ; it may be because I feel that I might so easily have done the same myself. I dare say I should, if I had not had enough and too much of running about the world before settling down at Hazeley."

Thought Lady Fyfield, " I wish he would suspect himself where he ought, instead of where he need not. Shall I tell him so ? No ! I must first hear what all this is preparatory to, for it *is* preparatory to something."

" It is disappointing," said he, after a rather long pause, " to see that Catholics who——"

" Here we are at last," thought she. " I fancied we were coming to this."

" ——who ought to be better, are among

the worst, the foremost in the follies of the day."

"Before I answer that," said she, "just answer me one question. Why are you disappointed? Disappointment implies expectation of something better. Now, why did you expect Catholics to be better than others?"

"Because their standard is higher."

"Standard of what?"

"I mean a higher ideal, greater examples, more distinct and habitual calls upon self-restraint."

"You mean that their standard of practice in the ordinary duties of life, which was what we were talking about, is higher?"

"Well, yes."

"Then it comes to this: when you speak of the standard being high, you refer to ordinary duties in general; when you complain of their being neglected, you are thinking of particular ones, but speaking of them as if they were the whole."

"I see what you mean," said Sherborne, making a movement as if to go.

"I should think you did," answered Lady Fyfield. "But you are not going. No, you shall *not* go away. You have been beating about the bush for the last half-hour, to

say all this about Catholics disappointing you—which is not the case, for you know you told me months ago that they gave you so good an example, and talked a great deal of nonsense about myself, and what I was, when I am nothing of the kind, and the rest; and now you find fault, just to excuse yourself for hanging back, when you know what your duty is. No, no! you *would* bring the subject up, carefully, working round to it for this last half-hour, and you *shall* hear me now. Sit down!"

It is needless to say that he obeyed. Had she argued the point, he would have found some loophole for escape; but against this little feminine outburst there was, of course, no defence. When he had sat down again, she went on as before, he wishing that he had left standards alone.

"No one's real standard of duty," said she, "will remain long above the level of his practice; if that falls, the standard must gradually fall, to meet the necessities of conscience, or else——"

"You are getting beyond me," said Sherborne. "I always knew that you were——"

"Oh, yes, of course—something wonderful, which I know very well I am not. You want

to weaken the force of the truth, by attributing it to the way the truth is told."

"Indeed," said he, "I was only going to say that I had no idea you had thought so deeply as that."

"And you had better continue to have no such idea," said she. "You will avoid a grave mistake."

"You really think that the standard falls with the practice?"

"I never said that. What I said was that people's real standard (not their imaginary one, set up as the object of pretence) will not remain long above the level of their practice —that it must fall to meet the necessities of conscience, or else——"

"Supposing a person has none?"

"But we are not supposing it; and if you shift your ground like that, I will not talk to you at all. It is just the way with all anti-Catholic arguments."

"But don't call mine anti-Catholic."

"And what else is it, I should like to know? You want to make it appear that it isn't necessary for you to be a Catholic; and what is that but trying to prove that the Church isn't the Church? And what is that but being anti-Catholic? You want to excuse

yourself: yes—now don't say it isn't so—and the last manœuvre is to pretend that you have taken fright at bad examples. And what are they after all? Why, it just amounts to this: that certain people who, as you might tell by their faces, are not over wise, allow themselves to be led into being sillier than they are by nature; and that certain others, wiser than they, but not gifted with much force of character, are not quite proof against the influence of the period."

" You put it very well."

" No, I don't; it puts itself so, it is the simple fact."

" I should like to know what you were going to say when I interrupted you. You were saying that people's real standard of conduct never can remain long above the level of their practice, but must fall to meet the necessities of conscience."

" Yes; or else the practice must rise up to the level of the standard. People can't go on long being hypocrites to themselves. Remember we are not talking about mortal sins and hard consciences, but of each person's own ideal (it was your own word) as to the application of acknowledged principles to the practice in the ordinary duties of his or her

position. Was that what you meant by standard?"

"Yes, I suppose it was—or would have been, if I had been so very particular."

"If you were more particular about what you mean, you would deal more honestly with your own conscience," said Lady Fyfield, accompanying the words with a look which gave him to understand that if he tried that game again he would hear something to his disadvantage.

"Oh, yes; of course I meant that," said Sherborne with much alacrity.

"Do you admit that this real standard of practice will not long remain what it was, if the practice is habitually below it?"

"Well, yes, I believe you are right."

"And you said that Catholics have a higher standard than other people."

"I did. But when I come to examine what it was I meant, I am afraid that I was unconsciously thinking of—of——"

"Of fasting and going to confession, and keeping the commandments. Of course you were—I knew that; and if I were to say that that was what I meant, I should find after a bit that you had shifted your ground again. You take the surface of social life, which is

just where people are most likely to be deceived by the tone of the world they live in, and you compare it with their standard of right and wrong in religious matters. You compare people's practice in things not rigidly defined with their principles in what is fixed and unmistakable. Is it honest, now—I won't say to argue, but to *think* in that way? Is it?"

"But I acknowledged it directly I saw how it was. One can't avoid these things always. I wasn't writing an essay. I was answering on the spur of the moment, in a room full of people chattering all round me like a lot of monkeys up a tree."

"But now that you *do* see, do you mean by the word 'standard,' in reference to your complaint against Catholics (English Catholics of the upper classes) what your comparison of their practice with their standard implied?"

"Why, I suppose I must."

"There is no 'must' in the case. Do say honestly what your meaning is. If it is going to have two faces, say so; but don't pretend that you don't know better."

"Well, then, yes. I *do* mean what you say I implied."

"What I say you implied? What you

did imply. This quibbling is unworthy of you, but worthy of your cause."

"What I *did* imply, then. Have it your own way. But there is a man, just come into the room, that I ought to speak to. I won't be a minute."

"Thank you," said Lady Fyfield, laying her parasol decisively on his arm as he was rising to go. "You can do that afterwards. I dare say the man will not go away. Do you, or do you not, mean what you implied at first?"

"Yes; in a sense."

"In a sense! Why is it that people who are straightforward in all other things cannot be commonly honest where Catholic principles are concerned? Can't you see what a dishonest habit of mind you are in on the subject? And can't you see that it is this devil who puts you into that habit of mind? You would never venture to play such tricks with the truth about anything else."

"Why, I was scrupulously particular to be straightforward about it. My words no doubt meant what you assumed them to mean; but, perhaps, my own meaning in using them was not so clear."

"You have said that before; and I don't ask

you what you meant then, but what you mean now."

" You are determined to hold me to that meaning, I see."

" I have been trying all the time to keep you to the plain meaning of your own words—that is all I have done."

" Let it be the meaning of them, then," said Sherborne.

" Don't pretend to concede anything," said Lady Fyfield. " They have no other meaning. Now let us come to the point. What do you expect them to have a fixed standard about, in social life ? Not about things that vary with circumstances, and are not always strictly definable—such as dress, amusements, and all that comes under the head of follies. You must look where they know their duty to be, not where it can and does assume all sorts of false disguises. Look at the innocence of thought and word, the charitable judgment of their neighbours' faults, the general simplicity of heart and mind. Do they fall below their standard in all that ? "

" No—they don't."

" And behind that there are works of mercy. You know what they are, for I gave you the catechism ; and behind that there is the

interior life ; and not unfrequently you would find both where you would least expect to do so.”

“ Well, but—about those works of mercy ? ” said Sherborne. “ If one ought to feed the hungry, one ought not to waste money that would help to do it ; and if it is a duty to convert the sinner, it is a dereliction of duty to encourage all sorts of sins by frequenting race-courses ; and if it is good to instruct the ignorant, it must be bad to mislead them. Now, who dress so extravagantly as Catholic ladies ? who crowd to—— ”

“ Yes, I know. Of course it is wrong to be over-dressed, or to be extravagant in any expenses ; of course people won’t edify others by appearing to think of little else than amusing themselves—— ”

“ Or by *more* than appearing to be as worldly as Protestants, without their *savoir faire*. ”

“ Certainly. But you mustn’t make mortal sins of all these ? ”

“ Surely there is pride—— ”

“ Say rather, vanity produced by silliness and want of ballast. Is a child proud when he struts about the nursery with a paper cap on his head ? The people you are speaking of have the defects of children with liberty to

indulge in them on a larger scale than children can ; but they have also much of the simplicity of children. Understand that, once for all, because it is the fact. But do you *want* to know ? or are you only picking up statements of facts and principles, in order to see what *further* objections you can twist out of them ? I have seen that game played so often that I am tired of it.”

Sherborne’s face lit up with a flash of quick recognition. “ No, no,” he said, “ I am not going to be so bad as that. But you are quite right. It is common enough. And you are right about the simplicity of Catholics.”

“ Yes,” said she ; “ and, let me tell you, that very simplicity makes their follies conspicuous. They have not the malice to go to work in a business-like way, as Protestants do.”

“ I believe you are right,” said Sherborne, looking half-persuaded and half-doubting ; but the doubt was rather in his will than in his mind. “ I believe you are right. It is a pity they reflect the external vices of the period.”

“ Yes,” said Lady Fyfield ; “ it is a pity, and so are a great many other things ; but that is no reason for being unjust about it, unjust by vague inferences—you understand me.”

Sherborne understood her so well that he

elected to make no reply. She waited just long enough to mark his silence, and said—

“ You see the worst of them—the silly caricaturing of Protestant fashionable life in its most trumpery types, the conspicuous excess of millinery, the badly done fine ladyism, the imitation fast manners, the hero-worshipping of Protestant fast people ; you see, in fact, what is on the surface : you don’t see what is beneath. I *have* seen beneath, and I tell you that you must look beneath the surface if you want to see what Catholicity can do with average natures—ay, and much below average natures. It is on the surface that human respect and the spirit of imitation show out so disagreeably : and do you not see a reason for that ? Do you not see that where the fundamental rules of life cannot be altered, subtracted from, mistaken, explained away, or by any means whatsoever made to be anything but what they are, the rebel instinct of fallen human nature will break out on the debatable ground of exaggerations ? For instance : What is over-dress ? What is dressing according to one’s station—which, we all know, is right in principle ? What constitutes fastness of manner ? Where is the line between dignity and assumption, between the fair and prudent choice of

one's acquaintance and capricious impertinence, between liberality and waste, between generosity and extravagance, between hospitality and convivial pomp? Where is the exact balance of various, and more or less conflicting claims, applicable to each person, and evident to each conscience? Try to define all these things, and you will see, even without referring to personal experience of failures in that line, how easy it is to make mistakes about them."

"I certainly should be puzzled to define all that straight off," said Sherborne.

"Do you mean to tell me that you could do so at all, if you had any amount of time to do it in?" said Lady Fyfield.

"Oh, no, of course not—as you put it," said he, hurrying over the last four words.

She looked up, and he said at once, with significant alacrity—

"But *do* go on."

"But there is a special reason why certain individuals of the upper classes of English Catholics are, at the present time, more liable to be drawn into such follies than other people—I mean their connection with the Protestant society of their own class now, compared with what it has been. Just glance at them

consecutively, and you will see what I mean. There was the period of gibbets and racks and dungeons : Catholics were outlaws then in the land their forefathers had civilized. There was the period of crushing fines and disabilities : they were outcasts in those days. There was the period when they were tolerated as a ‘hopeless minority,’ and held in mysterious respect as mediæval curiosities : they were in the world then, many of them at least, but not of it, though apparently intimate with some that were—strictly speaking, it was not being intimate, but superficially familiar. Then came the period of what I can only call Catholic excavation, when buried truth was dug out piecemeal by the University that had built dogmatic lath and plaster over it. Conversions began to be heard of all about the country, and though they appeared more numerous than they were, and promised to become so more than they have yet been, or seem at present likely to be, nevertheless, at the present time, there are few Protestants of any position in England, who have not one Catholic relation, near or distant, acknowledged or ignored. The gradual rising up (so to speak) of converts, in the midst of a nation long Protestant, has had results that might

have been expected—more or less. It has more or less affected both Catholics and Protestants superficially. Protestants are, as a rule, less inclined than formerly to believe the more absurd articles of the no-Popery creed; but they remain in principle just what they were, neither more nor less disposed to be Catholic, neither more nor less hostile to the fundamental principles of Catholicity. Catholics are just what they were in principle and in the practice of definite duties; but the influx of converts, whilst bringing additional numbers and strength, and perhaps infusing fresh vigour in many ways, seeing that a convert is likely to be in earnest, and has not been hereditarily crushed, necessarily brought Catholics into a more prominent, and in a sense, more proper position in the world. Now, I freely confess that the visible consequences of this, in some, are anything but edifying, and I know very well that it keeps many from becoming Catholics: I know it, for I know the people who have been kept back. I know, too, how morbidly sensitive a thing is a mind struggling against the accumulated sophistries of a life and generations of lives. I know that a rebuff to a high aspiration is one of the devil's easiest means for seducing a soul back from

the threshold of the Church. I will say more. I will say that the Catholics of England have had a great opportunity in becoming more generally known, and have not profited by it. They might be the virtual leaders of society, while some conspicuous among them are only its servile imitators. Their houses might be centres where the refined, the graceful, the cultivated, the high-minded, would be certain of a welcome ; where people would not be tolerated merely for giving parties, nor made up to for happening to be the fashion. They might be the real leaders of society, though the brilliant positions that the world has in its gift are virtually closed to them ; for they represent much noble blood, and many historic names, hallowed by noble and continuous acts of the highest courage, calmly repeated day by day during the times of persecution ; they have the moral vigour of fixed and unchangeable principles ; they have rules of interior life and habits of charity, of self-restraint, of self-knowledge, which, where not hidden by fatally conspicuous external faults, have a great power of appeal to the higher aspirations of their non-Catholic associates. They have, in fact, every requisite for virtual leadership by the force of inherited qualifica-

tions and personal example ; but too many are content to ape, without tact or dignity, those whom they ought either to teach or avoid. Have I acknowledged enough ? ”

“ You have indeed,” said Sherborne rather nervously, not quite knowing what he was expected to think about it.

“ Of course I have,” said she ; “ and do you know why ? ”

Sherborne felt and looked undecided ; he was wavering between two influences.

“ Because you are liberal-minded,” said he, trying to recall the words when he had half said them.

“ Which generally means favouring error and patronizing truth,” said she.

“ Well, large-minded.”

“ Which means, oftener than not, patronizing both and realizing neither. No ; please don’t call me those names. I don’t like them. I have acknowledged all this because it is true, and I volunteered to do so because the whole truth is not only the best apology for Catholic practice in general, just as it is for Catholic doctrine, but also the most triumphant vindication of its real superiority. Catholics are accustomed as individuals to look their faults in the face, and why should

there be any difficulty about those that one shares with others?"

"That is carrying humility a long way," said Sherborne. "When did you ever imitate anybody or anything, or show the slightest disposition to be over-dressed, or make it possible to associate your name with worldliness, well or badly carried out? I never knew any one so civilly independent of the world."

"How do you know that?" said she. "I *may* be imitating all the time in another direction; and if not, I *may* avoid doing so out of pride or vanity, to be singular, and seem better or wiser than many others. I *may* think as much of not over-dressing as some others think of over-dressing, and abstain from it through motives far more reprehensible. I *may* be indulging in a more subtle spirit of worldliness—the desire of seeming superior to it."

"No, no; I know you better than that. I really can't be made to believe——"

"Hear me out. I am not accusing myself of all that I have supposed in this list of possibilities; it would, indeed, be too bad if I could; but under-currents of meaner motives do run unsuspected beneath the surface of

habits good in themselves; and even if it should happen to be true that my own secret faults are not modifications of those you blame in others, how do you know that what I really have are not still worse in the eyes of God?"

"What did you mean by saying that it would be *too* bad if you did something pretty much the same as what you are excusing in others?"

"There you are again with the old story—avoiding the necessity of an answer by rushing into another question. Well, never mind! I will answer for both—first for you in answer to myself, and then for myself in answer to you. You should have answered that you really didn't know whether my faults were worse than those other people's, or not, but that you wanted to make the others out worse, for the purpose of making them seem to puzzle your sense of right and wrong, with a misleading example. That is what you would have said if you had told the truth—which you never do in connection with Catholics or Catholicity—never, never, because you never *think* truly about it. Now, as to your question why I said that it would be too bad if I did something pretty much the same as

what I had excused in others. I did not say it—I spoke of things different and worse ; but let it be so, if you like. What you blame them for would be much more blamable in me, who have not their special temptations to fall into those faults, nor their special good qualities to counterbalance them. Now, don't begin asking me what they are—I have told you enough. Look at yourself rather than at others. Look at yourself, trying to avoid, by hook or by crook, by any excuse, however frivolous or unreasonable, the conclusion which you can't get rid of. What have other people's faults to do with you and your duty of submission to the Church ? You are not so childish as to expect to find saints by the dozen, or ordinary people without ordinary failings. You know, as well as I do, that the follies you have been complaining of are just the follies that ordinary people would be likely to fall into, particularly under the circumstances I have named. You know, as well as I do, that if you were to measure those very people by the test of the commandments and the works of mercy, you would find, in natures far from exalted, supernatural motives which nothing but Catholicity could implant in them. You know very well, it would be a different

thing if you didn't know it, you know very well what would be the result of a thorough comparison between the whole practice of average Catholics, and the whole practice of average Protestants—that it would show a superiority on the part of Catholics, not natural but supernatural, and on no other supposition accountable to any one who knows anything of human nature. You know all this perfectly well—nobody better; for you *have* thought at intervals, when the bias of education, the mesmerism of the national press, and the subtle temptations of worldly interests, disguised by the bright colouring of aspirations just in themselves, were not happening to influence you—in short, when you were, for the moment, free from intelligent prejudice and human respect. You *have* thought, therefore you *can* think, and therefore you *ought* to think; and if you *would* only think, you would not have brought all this forward as a surreptitious Anglican difficulty. You would not have tried to infer—now don't deny that you have been trying to do so, and working round this last three quarters of an hour to lead up to it—you would not have tried to infer that truth can cease to be truth because a certain number of people

who believe in it do things which are silly and wrong. Oh! but you really ought to be ashamed of such reasoning. Why it's a woman's argument—just the sort of thing that a young lady would put into her journal abroad. I have heard the sort of thing often and often. A grand sentimental æsthetic flourish about shrines and convent bells, with some sickly reflection, how beautiful it would be, if—but then there are so many beggars about the streets, and somebody was so overcharged about a coral ornament at Naples! You would laugh at the young lady; but you are as bad yourself. You are worse; for she was only attracted to certain externals of the truth, and you are convinced of the truth itself. Yes! you *are* now—and you are trying to make believe that you are not; as if you could get rid of your responsibility by looking the other way, and declaring that you can't see. There now, go and talk to the man you said you wanted to talk to. You had much better. You are trifling with this world and the next. I dare say he can get you a vote, if he doesn't take the measure of your instability, and laugh at you behind your back—which is more likely. There he is, by the door. Pray go and talk to him.

She rose with emphasis ; even the folds of her dress as she stood still for an instant, with her face and her attention expressively directed away from him, symbolized the meaning of her words. Sherborne got up slowly and disappeared in the crowd, humiliated, ashamed, impressed with a sense of wrong-doing. What else did he feel ? He felt an inner consciousness of something, which, in spite of a strong instinct and subtle suggestion to the contrary, claimed his obedience.

“ Is this the grace of God ? ” was the thought that rushed into his mind with a speed and force analogous to that of lightning.

Lady Fyfield was at his side again for an instant : his guardian angel must have led her round the other room and suggested what she should say.

“ Don’t,” she said, “ don’t ask yourself such questions as—‘ Is this the grace of God ? ’ ‘ Am I resisting grace ? ’ ‘ How am I to know whether it is grace or not ? ’ Such questions would never come into your head if grace were not really offered. It is the devil that puts them there to tempt you—oh ! you *know* that it is.”

She glided away in the crowd, but her

words remained with him, and the echoes of bygone days, when she was “the ocean to the river of his thoughts,” acted subtly on his heart, disposing him to be true towards God as he had been true in that human affection.

How long would this last! Let those answer for its permanence who believe in the power of sentiment to create a supernatural motive, and have never experienced or witnessed what Anglican difficulties can do to mislead the intellect, deceive the heart, and paralyse the will.

CHAPTER VII.

“Pour s'établir dans le monde, on fait tout ce qu'on peut pour y paraître établi.”—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

MISS HERMIONE CRUMPS was making herself evident in the farther drawing-room of Sir Roger Arden's house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square. The house was roomy—whether the term be taken to mean full of rooms, or of ample size generally, or both. The furniture was good but rather worn : its loose ornaments were limited, as is wont to be the case in houses let for two months. They had been put away in closets by desire, lest cracks of ancient date should be put down in the bill of dilapidations.

It was the hour of afternoon tea, and the bright blue of the tea-things played an important part at the end of two long rooms whose general colouring had become neutral. At first sight, it would seem paradoxically a small thing that a large lady should be evident, and unnecessary that she should take measures to

make herself what she already was ; but if one comes to think of it, and consult one's experiences of human types, the fact becomes apparent that some people have a way of impressing their presence more heavily than others, by concentrating all the will they possess on the energy of self-manifestation.

Which was just what Miss Hermione Crumps did habitually, and was practising on that occasion. If she got on in the world better than people who were better born, better connected, better off, better looking, better educated, even better endowed with those gifts which the world understands, and therefore appreciates without resenting, it was mainly because she concentrated her whole will, energy, attention, and interest on impressing her presence where she wanted to impress it. She had all the requirements for success of that sort—a conspicuous exterior, rude health, versatile habits of superficial sympathy, a sanguine temperament quite free from sensitiveness, a stiff plasticity of tastes that made her seem unselfish without losing chances by being so. Moreover, she had the double incitement of being pretty well connected and quite otherwise, her mother, Crayston's sister, having eloped with the late much respected

Mr. Joshua Crumps, then a fine florid young man behind the counter of Messrs. Gingham and Tape, in Ledchester. Crumps, after he was married, abandoned the yard measure, became a sleeping partner in a distant establishment, and went abroad as a *rentier* with his wife, her French maid, and a letter of introduction to the English minister at Florence: the practical result of the latter has not been ascertained. At Florence Miss Hermione was born, and there she was educated (save the mark!)—taught that black was not so very different from white, if you arranged the lights properly; the difference, except in certain cases (no one could permanently tell what), being reducible to relative position and conditions of sight. In short, she had, without being aware of it, experienced the truth that residence in a Catholic country is, of all things, most dangerous to Anglicans of the present day. Her belief in the Establishment was belief in an institution, not in a creed. Founded on nationalism, it inflated like a balloon, at the thoughts of a British man-of-war, or the sight of the lion and unicorn over the British embassy; associated in England with property and influence, which she appreciated for England while wish-

ing success to foreigners who would destroy both if they could, it glowed in territorial dining-rooms and dilated in family pews. But as to Anglicanism on its own merits, it was well for her, perhaps, that she had never discovered how little she believed, how much indifferentism, to say no worse, had grown up in secret within her, from living in a land where Catholicity has no pseudo-equivalent as in England, and where its alternative is an apostasy of the vilest, meanest type, especially deleterious to the suspicious simplicity of the normal English mind.

She had not discovered how little she believed, but only thought herself “a good Churchwoman,” a friend to Italian freedom, and a general discoverer of the good and beautiful wherever it was to be found—“wherever” being understood, on that afternoon and in that drawing-room, as particularly referring to the society of English Catholics, excluding converts, of course, because their *raison d'être* disagrees with the theory of limited selection, which supposes that respectable Popery should be the choice of those alone whose families were Catholic in the year 1829. Besides, converts were of no use to her; they might as well be Protestants—in fact, better,

if they had any position available for giving distinction by acquaintance ; for as converts they lose much of their former solid advantages, without having the select and mystic dignity which, in the perverted but naturally just and darkly poetical English mind, hangs about those families who retained their faith through the times of persecution. That select and mystic dignity—suggestive of haunted castles, ruined abbeys by moonlight, Benedictines hidden behind tapestry, walled-up nuns, proud pontiffs, belted knights, distressed damsels, conspirators, bandits, trap-doors, dungeons, monks blessing daggers in chorus, Guy Faux on a tar-barrel (compare “*Marmion*,” the opera of “*Les Huguenots*,” Mr. G. P. R. James *passim*, and the “hollow-boys” on the 5th of November)—had another aspect less romantic but more practical. It represented (at least, she thought so) a certain social value in the eyes of all foreigners worth knowing. “And,” thought she, with a simplicity that would have been charming if the thought itself had been a little more so, “it’s so much more independent, and all that, and looks so much more like having an assured position of one’s own, to know them well, when one isn’t one of them.”

That was what she thought ; and the Ardens were being drawn by sheer force of heavy will into allowing, without conscious annoyance, that kind of social frequentation which is the nearest approach to intimacy between those who have no idea in common beneath the surface of things.

She was sitting there, looking ponderously at home, having been to luncheon at Lord Ledchester's, where she read up the *Rock*; dined, the day before, at Lord Oxborough's, where she delighted Sir Thomas Grubhedge with wonderful tales about "crypto-Jesuits," all from the best authority, made Mr. Glenfillan Bruff invite her to his other place, somewhere in Scotland, for the whole month of August, and was asked by Lady Ledchester to stay at Monksgallows on her return south.

"Oh ! but I have got such a story for you," said she, after having unfolded her engagements in the form of an apology for being late.

"What is it ?" said some one ; and then they all listened, keeping their countenances fixed on hers, like Dido's guests before the pious Æneas.

"Well, you know, it's rather a long one," said she, "and I haven't much time. I pro-

mised to try a duet with a Mr. ——; I forget his name—a charming tenor, they say. I said I would be at—oh! I forget where, but they're friends of Lady Oxborough's, and it was she that asked me to go, and I asked her to call for me here, and she will be here directly, or 'else Uncle Crayston will call for me. But the story is this——”

“A very vivacious and, no doubt, amiable sort of girl, but I don't quite like her ways; I dare say it's a rash judgment of mine, though,” thought Sir Roger in the recesses of his great honest heart and shrewd simplicity.

“She would be much nicer if she were a Catholic,” thought both the Miss Ardens, trying hard to think that, sooner or later, she must, and half inclined to accuse themselves of uncharitableness for not quite seeing their way to feel sure about it.

“You know the old woman who lives in that queer house not far from Ferry Corner Station?”

“Yes,” said Sir Roger. “She is a lady, and had something to do with old Mrs. Sherborne, whose father forfeited the property in '46; and that was how her husband, who was her cousin also, came in for it.”

“Have you ever heard that she is seen sometimes in two places at once?” asked Miss Hermione.

“No, never,” said he. “The only thing of the kind I ever heard of was Sir Boyle Roche’s metaphorical bird.”

“Did *you*?” said she to the Miss Ardens; whereat two pairs of eyes, pure and translucent as the light of a harvest moon, looked up intelligently puzzled.

“No,” they said.

And that was all they said, as became prudent young ladies, who thought probably that the least said is soonest mended when you know not what is coming.

“Nor I either, to tell the truth,” said she, with the careless gaiety and hard assumption, in unequal and indistinct proportions, which make up that minor nuisance of the period —chaff.

But they only perceived, or, in their charity, only acknowledged, the gaiety; and they listened in that spirit for her story.

“Well,” she said, “you see, they say everything except that. They say she has been seen, with a candle in her hand, at the window of that weird-like old room out of the bedroom at the end of the dark panelled passage. You

remember, the day we were all there, the morning of your ball?"

Yes, they did remember, and had been over the house often before she had ever heard of the place; but it entered into the scheme of her successful oppressiveness to seem naturally more intimate than the person she was talking with, wherever intimacy had had any furthering or even supporting power in the world.

"Well," said she, after a sudden attack on the tea and rolled up bread and butter, followed by a brief soliloquy about Lady Oxborough being late, "you see, it was in that room, and she struck a lucifer match and lit a candle. How she got there in the dark I don't know; but this person saw her—he is some old fellow about the place, I believe, who was a knife-boy, or something of the kind, when she was companion, or lady's-maid, or house-maid, or whatever she was to old Mrs. Sherborne, who was an old witch, too, or something wicked."

"I never heard her accused of riding on a broomstick or blighting people's potatoes," said Sir Roger; "but she certainly profited by the misfortunes of others, if she had no hand in causing them. Her father was ac-

cused of helping Prince Charlie in '45—which, as a matter of fact, I believe he never did. The property was confiscated and given to the next heir—a nephew. But the poor man was dead by that time; and it was his son—a boy at Douai, who really lost the property. The sister (the old Mrs. Sherborne you speak of) married the nephew, her cousin. She left only one surviving son. At any rate the youngest, who was the heir, was drowned in the old ford near Sheldington, where the bridge is now. He wanted to marry his grandmother's companion, this very old lady who lives at the Four Ways; but his father wouldn't hear of it, though she was as well born as he, for the matter of that, and could not help being the daughter of a younger son who had a large family and no profession."

"Oh, yes; and Mr. George Sherborne got Hazeley by a fluke," said Miss Hermione, who was not going to let any one know more about it than she did.

"Rather a slang word," thought Sir Roger; "but I suppose she caught it from her brothers—only she has got none, I believe."

"It came to him collaterally, no doubt, like many other properties," he said.

"Yes—and—well, I shouldn't like to have

a place that has been unjustly taken from others—that I shouldn't; though I dare say the old fellow was a rebel.—Oh no! I don't mean really, of course."

"Sherborne gets it quite fairly as far as he is concerned, at any rate," said Sir Roger. "It was legally confiscated from the elder line a hundred and twenty-four years ago, and it was left by will to his mother, whose heir he is."

"Well, it was very hard," said she, twisting up the tassel of her parasol, and pouting. The pout was partly artificial: the thing signified was natural enough. It never occurred to Sir Roger that there is, in certain feminine natures of the less exalted types, a special disposition to resent being civilly contradicted in things unimportant; so, giving her credit for virtuous indignation, he merely said—

"Oh! it's all right as far as Sherborne is concerned, I assure you. In the first place —waiving his legal right, and the length of time, and the impossibility of disproving the accusation of what was, in fact, at least high treason—he is, I believe, really the heir, the next of kin; for the elder line died out. The boy who was deprived of his inheritance had two children—sons, both of whom died

unmarried. One was guillotined during the Reign of Terror, and the other married a Miss Atherstone, went to India, and both died, so I was told by some one who knew them. I believe she was a sister of that very Mrs. Atherstone who lives at the Four Ways."

"Well, I dare say it's all right," said she; but it's so awfully jolly to believe in a way that something dreadfully wicked has been done in an old house, especially when an old woman comes and haunts the place on purpose to tell people all about it. It's so like a thrilling tragedy on the stage."

"The villagers always fancy there is something preternatural about Mrs. Atherstone, I know," said Sir Roger, "because she lives alone, and walks in the dark. I shouldn't wonder at anything you might hear concerning her."

"Ah ! you Roman Catholics are so matter-of-fact about those things : you won't let one enjoy the thing properly. I do believe, now, you would have Masses said if an old ghost came and bothered you."

"That depends on circumstances," said he.

"Now for my story," said she, "for I shall have to go away directly. Good gracious ! it's a quarter to six now. How late Lady Ox-

borough is. I suppose she had to fetch him from the House of Lords. Well, then—but there isn't much more to tell—the old fellow saw Mrs. Atherstone in that little room. It was twelve o'clock at night, and every one was in bed."

"What was *he* doing at such an hour? I should think he dreamt it all," said Sir Roger.

"He had been seeing to the fire in the grape-house, and all that. It happened a fortnight ago, when the weather was very cold, before I came to town; only I have been so much engaged that I could never find a moment to tell you the story till now."

"Anyhow, I am glad to hear that Sherborne's people are so careful about the fires."

"You are so provoking about it. You won't take any interest in my ghost."

"Ghost? I thought Mrs. Atherstone was alive."

"Yes, she's alive enough, but—well, it isn't exactly a ghost—it's her double."

"That *is* dreadful. Surely one Mrs. Atherstone at once is sufficient for one neighbourhood."

"I won't be laughed out of my story. It was her double. What else could it be?"

“Are doubles in the habit of striking lucifer matches?”

“I suppose they do, or make believe to do it, like other ghosts. Oh! you mustn’t question me too closely about supernatural things, and miracles, and spirit-rapping, and all that sort of thing.”

“Then you class the multiplication of the loaves and fishes with table-turning?” said Lady Fyfield, who entered the room at that moment.

There was a dead silence for a moment or two. Miss Hermione Crumps looked about, and made abortive attempts to laugh.

“I should be glad to know,” said Lady Fyfield, “what you mean by the supernatural—what you mean by a miracle—what sort of evidence——”

“Oh!” said Miss Hermione, “pray don’t—I really cannot pretend to say. I only believe what I can understand.”

Sir Roger thought of Dr. Parr’s answer to a similar statement—“Then your creed will be the shortest on record;” and it did occur to him also to ask civilly whether all these things about which she objected to be questioned too closely had any particular meaning separately and collectively in her mind; but he said to

himself, “She knows no better,” and pretended not to understand—which, in a sense, he certainly did not.

“But I *do* believe *this*,” she said, laughing affectedly. “It must be something, you know. There she was—the old fellow saw her distinctly at the window, and all the doors were fastened, so that she couldn’t have got in anyhow. And yet there she was—lucifer matches and candle and all. You know the place was said to be haunted.”

“Very likely,” said Lady Fyfield; “old houses are apt to get that reputation. And what with the heir being drowned, and the property passing out of the Catholic line, and Mrs. Atherstone’s connection with the place, I should not be surprised at any amount of ghost stories.”

“Oh! yes,” said Hermione. “Old Mrs. Sherborne haunts it, and her husband, and the man who was drowned, and a lot more besides. But Mrs. Atherstone, you see, had a real candle and struck a lucifer match. She ought to have had a tinder box, but I believe it was the last new thing in modern matches, Bryant and May’s, that won’t go off except on their own box. And unless she’s a witch, and got up there on a broomstick, through the window,

or down the chimney, why, I suppose the man imagined it. But I mean to believe it all, because it's so jolly, and—you see I heard it from the old fellow's son; and I am going to tell you how it was, because there's something creepy in that—at least, it sounds as if it ought to be. No doubt the old bureau was bewitched—oh! but I haven't told you about it yet. Well, this is how it was: you see my sister wanted more room at the Rectory for some of the children—the last were twins, and I can't count them exactly, but they're something within a dozen or two, I don't know which for certain. Anyhow, she wanted more room, and so they made another nursery out of an old lumber-room, where there was some rubbish, left there by the executors when the last clergyman of Fernham—old Mr. Moreton, died. It was of no use to my sister, and so they sold it all to a man who keeps a curiosity shop in Lyneham, except one bureau, and that was bought by Mrs. Atherstone, who actually came up to look at it, and nearly frightened the maid-servant into fits to see such a queer old thing, looking as if she had got the evil eye, or had been living inside a wall for two or three centuries, as toads do, they say, and come out rather the better for it. The old

thing bought this bureau for thirty shillings or so, which was as queer as herself, and as musty and fusty as possible, after being stuck away there among the rats and the mice and the bats, and she bundled it away to her house pretty quickly in a donkey-cart. Now, the donkey-cart belongs to a son of the old fellow, who saw her and the candle and the lucifer matches and all, up at the window at Hazeley. The son lives in Fernham village, and he told me of what his father had seen, and got quite pale about it. I happened to be coming down-stairs at the time, and stopped to speak to him. By the bye, I wonder what has become of old Mr. Moreton's son, who was staying with you last November? He took me in to dinner, I remember, and in to luncheon, too, at Hazeley, and he haunted me at your ball."

Poor Moreton! If he had only heard what was being said and suggested about him in the presence of Mary Arden! O Hermione Crumps! you are an adept at female diplomacy of the baser sort; for you are favouring your own vanity of conquest at the expense of others by suggestion. There is nothing in the fact of his taking you in to dinner as often as he was called upon to do so—but everything in the pretended effort of memory and the

emphasis on the word “ too ; ” nothing in the bare assertion that he haunted you at the ball, for it need not imply knowledge on his part—everything in the tone, and the juxtaposition.

“ Nobody knows where he’s gone to,” she said, after pausing to take breath. “ Oh, there’s the carriage—what a bore ! ”

This last observation was called forth by the entrance of the butler to announce the fact that Lady Oxborough had called for her. It abounded in its own meaning.

After she had left the room Sir Roger tried hard to think that the hypothetical brothers were the cause of her less agreeable manifestations, and finding some difficulty in doing so, quickly left off thinking about her. Winifred Arden thought, as before, that she would be much nicer if she were a Catholic, and no doubt would be some day—touching which last opinion the writer of this history is compelled to differ from her. Miss Arden thought as her sister did, but not quite in the same way, not quite as before.

Lady Fyfield waited till the door had closed, and said in a tone of profound conviction—

“ What a detestable sort of girl that is ! ”

“ You are hard on her,” said Sir Roger.

"Certainly not; she is a horrid girl," said Lady Fyfield, "to pretend that people are running after her when they are doing just the reverse—yes—just the reverse. As if I had not seen him trying to avoid her, though I only just know him by sight! It was so evident."

"But do you know, really," said Winifred Arden, "in spite of all she may say when she is talking so fast, I fancy that some day——"

"Oh yes; because she goes to Benediction, and is intimate with some bad Catholics abroad. I know that game. It pays well. They attract innocent Catholics, like yourself, who are not up to the manœuvres, and make them think they are going to be converted by the '*Recit d'une Sœur.*' They attract the non-Catholic world by natural affinity and sympathetic force of usefulness to itself. They get on all the better with both by quickly playing off the one against the other, so as to enhance their own value."

Sir Roger laughed, forasmuch as he failed to understand her, and thought that a little ambiguous hilarity was the most serviceable kind of acknowledgment.

"It's all very well to laugh, but I am right," said Lady Fyfield persistently.

"I dare say you are," said he smiling. "But, you know, you good converts *are* a little hard on the people who don't see it."

"And you good old Papists (I mustn't say old Catholics now, because the term has been monopolized by the last new thing in heresy) are so single-minded, so accustomed by early training to the spiritual straightforwardness of Catholicity, that you can't perceive the by-paths and crooked ways along which these people, whom you say I judge hardly, can always escape from being confronted by the duty of submission to the Church. Why, their minds are riddled with them, like a rabbit-warren; and when you think they are convinced on a point, down they pop, to re-appear presently as if nothing had happened. Mind, I am not speaking of people who have genuine difficulties, and are honest about them, nor of people who have never doubted the Divine authority of the intensely human Establishment—how many there are of these now I can't say; nor am I speaking of people who can reconcile our Lord's anathema against those who 'will not hear the Church' with the theory that there is no visible Church to hear, and can't see that they are talking nonsense, though they are sensible, sometimes

even shrewd, on all other subjects. Oh! I know well the power of a Protestant education to obstruct and confuse; I know well how it can paralyse common sense, and make religion almost impossible. I feel the deepest sympathy for those who have been from early childhood entangled in its meshes. But the people I am speaking of (and Miss Hermione Crumps is one of them) are not honest enough to be prejudiced, nor feeling enough to be fond of a big family pew, nor religious enough to care about knowing the truth, nor earnest enough to renounce the business-like trifling and reserved patronage which makes them at home on the surface of all religions, and answers their purpose in the world as it now is. They are wise in their generation, I dare say; but don't be deceived about them. Converts are not made out of such stuff as that. Good-bye—I must be going."

"Well, you ought to know," said Sir Roger.

"But you don't quite think I do," she said.

"No, no; not that," he replied, after a moment's reflection, slowly, and, as it were, provisionally.

"We will have it out another time," said Lady Fyfield.

While this conversation was going on, Miss Hermione, having rehearsed “*Parigi o cara*” with the charming tenor, was making herself popular with a select and appreciative audience by adapting her talk to the favourite weakness of each and the general agreement of all.

But she meditated something more difficult than self-adaptation. She had heard that Sherborne was going to take Lord and Lady Oxborough, their two daughters, and all the Ardens, on his drag to Ascot, and she meant him to take her also.

CHAPTER VIII.

Archer. And how can you expect a blessing by going to church now.

Aimwell. Blessing? Nay, Frank, I ask but for a wife!

FARQUHAR, *The Beaux' Stratagem.*

NEXT Sunday afternoon, at or about half-past four o'clock, Sherborne might be seen coming out of Berkeley Square into Hill Street, and round the corner of that mews which found itself famous at no-Popery tea-tables, what time Lord John Russell wrote his Durham letter.

His pace decreased and his countenance expanded as he walked along the uneven pavement of Farm Street, but particularly after he had turned the next corner, and spoken to divers young men decorated as to their button-holes with flowers from Covent Garden. They put him on good terms with himself, those self-impressionable youths, by being on conspicuously good terms with them-

selves, and by causing him to comfort his conscience with the excuse that, all things considered, he was at least as thorough as they.

Inside the church there was much tramping of feet, bustling movement of ladies' dresses, and manifestation of hats in mid-air, as if by a common agreement to shirk all but the music, incense, and lights. The people who made all this row, disturbing the congregation, and suggesting the idea of a rush for half-price at a theatre, arrived punctually together, and seemed accustomed to do so. Sherborne fell into the line, and felt at home there; for, thought he, "these people can't, all of them, have the difficulties that I have; yet some I have certainly seen doing this long enough without going any further. Some of them, too, are Catholics, and they swagger in just like the others."

Justice, charity, and common sense would have told him to look at the multitude that was there already, quiet and recollect ed, rather than at the excessively got-up crowd tumbling in just before the *O Salutaris*; but charity and common sense were not asked. They would have told him more than he wanted to know. How far he could have

continued to deceive himself in comfort, if he had been alone in the church, with no light but the Sanctuary lamp, it may be idle to inquire. As it was, he got up after Benediction, comforted in his conscience, and secretly grateful to the people who had furnished him with a sort of comparative excuse.

It was a bad sign that he felt less ashamed of himself this time than when he was there last. No man can remain stationary in a current. He makes way or is borne back.

Loud was the sudden outburst of the organ, but louder the millinery that advertised itself on the church steps, louder the manners of young men, more than a few, who swaggered around.

“She’s not here,” thought Sherborne secretly and without being quite conscious of the thought.

Wasn’t she though? He had forgotten that other door round the corner; but Lady Fyfield had not, and as he passed it he met her—the Miss Ardens being within a yard of the spot, and he on the point of turning towards them. Lady Fyfield said nothing, neither did she look at or towards him; yet he followed her—past all the Ardens too, without stopping to speak. If he had been

asked why he did so, he could not have given an intelligible answer.

“ You had better not come out of your way,” said she suddenly, when they had reached the corner of John Street.

These were her first words. As she uttered them she stood impatiently still, fixing her eyes on the ground, and poking at the pavement with her parasol.

“ You had better not come any farther, *I* think,” she said, catching up the parasol, and walking away.

Sherborne thought so too, nevertheless he came.

“ You are walking home ? ” he said nervously.

“ I am,” was the reply, given in the coldest of tones.

“ Across the park ? ”

“ It is the nearest way, I believe.”

“ To Prince’s Gate ? ”

“ I have not changed my house.”

Sherborne wished that he had turned down John Street, and was beginning to say, “ I suppose, then, as you seem,” when Lady Fyfield at last condescended to look towards him, as if willing to hear what he had to say ; and this was their conversation :—

Sherborne. "What have I done that you won't speak to me?"

Lady Fyfield. "I have answered your questions."

Sherborne. "Yes—well—scarcely."

Lady Fyfield. "There is nothing more to be said."

Sherborne. "Why?"

Lady Fyfield. "I think you had better not ask why."

Sherborne. "Yet you found something to say when last we met."

Lady Fyfield. "I had something to say, and I said it, and I would say it again now if I could do any good."

Sherborne. "But you have no patience——"

Lady Fyfield. "I have had too much——"

Sherborne. "——with a poor fellow who is trying his best to——"

Lady Fyfield. "Deceive himself and others."

Sherborne. "I assure you that I am not."

Lady Fyfield. "Now don't quibble. There are more ways than one of deceiving one's self. You can resist the truth, and you can look away from it."

Sherborne. "Yes; but I really haven't."

Lady Fyfield. "And you can submit your will to sophistry."

Sherborne. "Isn't that the same practically as looking away from it?"

Lady Fyfield. "No, it is not; and you know that as well as I do."

Sherborne. "What is the difference?"

Lady Fyfield. "You know the difference very well, for you have done both."

Sherborne. "You give me credit for being much sharper than I am."

Lady Fyfield. "Nonsense! I won't talk to you at all unless you mean to be straightforward. Now, *do you want* to hear the truth, or not? because if you only intend quibbling and catching me up, and getting out of things, you had better go away."

Sherborne. "No, I really don't."

Lady Fyfield. "People can deceive themselves by resisting the truth. I don't say that *you* have done so—I *hope* you have not: you can tell if you try. They can deceive themselves by looking away from the truth, and you are doing so. They can deceive themselves by submitting their will to sophistry, and you are doing that also."

Sherborne. "Looking away from the truth in order to deceive one's self implies looking at something false, disguised as truth; and that disguise is affected by false reasoning, which,

if conscious, is, in fact, resistance. Submission to a resisting power is resistance by consent."

Lady Fyfield. "And suppose it is. Do people always know what they are consenting to? You are trying to hide what your conscience accuses you of, by making it out to be the same as something else of which it acquits you."

Sherborne. "But I was going to say——"

Lady Fyfield. "That will do now. You are looking away from the truth and submitting your will to sophistry."

Sherborne. "If I am it is unconsciously."

Lady Fyfield. "Don't say that. The very word 'if' denotes a doubt in your mind, and you are bound to——"

Sherborne. "I was speaking hypothetically, not as having any doubt or suspicion myself."

Lady Fyfield. "It is not true. You forget, or try to do so: but I do not. You said to me last autumn at Dredgemere, and again at Bramscote—Mary Arden heard you, so it's no use denying it—you said that you couldn't see your way clearly; that you wished to know the truth; that you had lost all confidence in the Establishment; that the only power Protestantism had retained over you was the

negative power to suggest difficulties ; that you were continually catching yourself out in sophisms against Catholicity which you never would have thought of using against anything else ; that you desired above all things to see your way clearly. You said all that, and a great deal more—you asked us to pray for you, that you might be guided to the truth ; and now you ask me to believe that you are invincibly ignorant. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself.”

Sherborne. “But *do* listen.”

Lady Fyfield. “No ! I will not. I have had enough of that. You only try to excuse yourself. Go home, and pray for guidance with a firm purpose of following it, and you will soon be at peace. But you have no real intention of doing so. You are not honest with yourself.”

Sherborne. “Bear with me a little longer. I really want more time.”

Lady Fyfield. “No, you don’t : it is nothing but a temptation.”

Sherborne. “One has scruples.”

Lady Fyfield. “Don’t tell stories. What do you mean by ‘one has’ ? Do you mean to tell me that *you* have scruples ? Answer me that !”

Sherborne tried to say that he had ; but her eyes were upon him, and he was silent. She waited a few seconds, and said—

“ You have answered me by your silence ; you dare not look at me and deny it. The fact is, your difficulties are not difficulties of faith : they are worldly difficulties—human respect and ambition. You don’t want time to think : you want the will to do so as your conscience would direct, if you would but examine it honestly. Don’t trifle with grace, or it may be taken from you. Are you so mad as to risk THAT ? ”

Presently she added in a softer voice, he having remained silent—

“ I reminded you the other night of the promise you made two and twenty years ago ; I remind you of it again ; and this is most likely the last time, for it seems worse than useless to attempt persuading you.”

Sherborne still remained silent, looking towards her from time to time without raising his eyes : nor did she speak again until many seconds had gone by, when she said in continuance—

“ Therefore I had better make an end of it now ; and I entreat you to listen——”

“ Indeed, I *do* listen—what *can* I say to

make you believe that I do?" interrupted Sherborne.

"It has occurred to me as just possible," said she, "that what I said to you about Winifred Arden may have set you against all that I said besides; therefore, I must ask you to make an effort and separate the two questions in your own mind completely. I advised you not to delude yourself about her, certainly: I tried to save you from a disappointment and humiliation; but I will say no more on that subject: you will see your own way best about that. Be sure of this much, however. You will never win her by playing fast and loose with your conscience."

"Oh! I really am not thinking about her," said Sherborne.

Nor was he at that moment. His voice trembled, and his cheek was pale. His mind had wandered back two and twenty years.

Lady Fyfield made no reply, but after a slight gesture of impatience instantly repressed, she said—

"Remember! The duty of submitting to the Church is, as soon as you are aware of it, absolute; and hesitation is then without excuse."

"How do you do, Lady Fyfield?" said a

voice that she recognized by its distinguishing attribute of a double expression. She looked up and saw Crayston taking off his hat with that kind of deferential self-importance which assumes by implication, and which every woman would appreciate according to her own measure—one as a homage from mysterious greatness; another as humbug added to impertinence; another as something oppressive, puzzling, and on the whole disagreeable; another as proving a right to hero-worship; another as “the most affronting thing in the world;” another as evidence of power yielding itself captive, like Una’s lion; others as pretentiousness doubled by condescension.

The latter would have been Lady Fyfield’s appreciation of his deportment, if she had thought about it. But she did not consider him in detail; she disliked him altogether, with true female acuteness. He tried to join them, but she quietly caused him to desist from the attempt, and said as soon as he was out of hearing—

“That is a horrid man, and he has had a bad influence over you lately.”

“But I can’t bear the fellow—I never could,” said Sherborne.

"Never mind. He can influence you badly all the same for that—more insidiously, in fact, because you flatter yourself that he can't."

Sherborne mutely protested.

"Oh! but he has *done* so," said Lady Fyfield, in a parenthesis as if to herself, adding, "I wonder you can tolerate such a man. Other people besides myself can see it."

By this truly feminine piece of rhetoric she had made Sherborne ashamed of himself in relation to Crayston, Count de Bergerac, and Winifred Arden.

CHAPTER IX.

“O that he were here to write me down—an ass !”
Much Ado About Nothing.

If Count de Bergerac could have known all that had occurred concerning himself since he drove away from Bramscote in a fly during the small hours, while Crayston was showing circumstantially that he was a swindler, and persuading Sherborne to tell Sir Roger so, or if he could have known all that concerned himself in England since that eventful night, and then have seen just what happened to Sherborne on the morning of the Ascot Cup day, he would have met with an occasion for that kind of “sudden glory” which Hobbes defines laughter to be. The Ascot Cup day turned out for Sherborne thus :—

Punctually at ten he drove up to Sir Roger’s house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, as hopeful, or at least, as sanguine

as ever, of the contradictory fortunes he persisted in desiring. His whole turn-out was thoroughly good ; he was thoroughly at home at his work ; he was able to say truly that Lady Oxborough, her two daughters, and Miss Arden, had each declined electing to sit on the box, when asked the question on the previous evening, so that the box place seemed to be distinctly and naturally marked out for Miss Winifred Arden by that potent, though not always trustworthy, friend in need, the force of circumstances. He was in hypothetically good spirits, having just reviewed his own case under the supposition that Popery might not, after all, stand in the way of his election for the county, if he could put off being too definite. Lady Fyfield's warnings had not passed out of his mind : they rankled there, and made him obstinate in his inconsistency. If he had thought out what was rankling in his mind, or to speak more correctly, in his heart, the sum of it would have put itself into these or equivalent words : "She broke my heart and now reproaches me, because, like other broken things, it has no unity."

It never occurred to him, or not conveniently for his purpose, that hearts are not

looking-glasses, but are themselves reflected by words and actions, which are in our own power.

A very pretty thing human nature is, and prettily it shows itself off sometimes in people born for better things. There he was, morbidly sensitive about his first love, and morbidly making a fool of himself about a young lady who did all she could to make him feel himself in the way.

But what can one expect from a man who is in such a condition that he can feel comfortable after a lady has looked down the outline of her nose while he was trying to engage her in conversation?

He drove up to Sir Roger's door; but somebody else did the same. It was Miss Hermione Crumps. Crayston was there too, in a corner of the brougham; but her dress eclipsed him till he was wanted to speak, and then she caused him to come forth with well-regulated spontaneity. That self-asserting little man, the measure of all things to himself, was, as it were, lifted off his feet by the pressure of her indivisible intention.

“Oh! ah! How are you, Sherborne?” he said, standing up square, and trying to look unwillingly conscious of being about to confer

a favour. “The most provoking sort of thing has happened to me about this going to——”

“Oh! yes—to Ascot,” said Hermione; “and just as we were starting he had a note from a tiresome lawyer, saying he must go down to Lincoln’s Inn, or some of those places, about some trustee business; and so, just as we were getting into the carriage——”

Crayston was going to protest against the latter statement, as possibly compromising to himself, for he lodged at one of the innumerable private hotels in Albemarle Street, and Sherborne at another lower down. “And,” thought he, “confound it! unless he started from his stables—and I don’t know where they are—he must have passed my door. And if he noticed that there was no carriage there but this heavy one-horse thing, that could never possibly get to Ascot in a fortnight——”

The roots of his hair came over in a prickly heat, as he thought of what she was entailing upon him. “This is going too far,” he said to himself. “It puts one in such a position—to be found out as if one were telling a lie.”

So he began to say—but he had better have left it alone—

“The fact is, it was not exactly——”

"No! that's just it," interrupted the irrepressible Hermione, in a low voice, well directed at his ear. "I declare now, uncle, I'll tell him you brought me here on purpose, if you say any more about it."

Awed by this threat, and consoling his dignity by a little inward chuckle appreciative of her malicious readiness, he awaited events with fluttering confidence in her ability to take care of him as well as of herself.

"Yes, there we were, on the point of starting," said Hermione, filling up the window and half-open door of the brougham.

A bad word came to the front in Crayston's mind, and the prickly heat again made itself felt at the roots of his hair. He had been untrue in principle and in practice all his life, certainly; but no man could say of him that he had ever committed himself to a direct statement of a disprovable fact.

"*Do* remember that he must have just driven up Albemarle Street, and seen that we were not starting," he whispered.

"Nonsense! as if he could know now that we were not going from the Dover Street side! The house goes through—at least, some of them do, and why not that one?"

"Here I am, standing and looking like a

fool," thought Crayston, from the foot pavement.

"Isn't it provoking, now," said Hermione from the half-open door of the brougham.

"Indeed, it is," muttered Sherborne from the coach-box, looking round stealthily towards the drawing-room windows of the house.

"To be thrown over at the last moment like that," said she; "and when one has made one's arrangements, and given up going to see some people one particularly wanted to see, who are going out of town to-morrow morning—and I can't go by myself! Now, if I could only have known it ten minutes earlier, I could have gone with the Glenfillan Bruffs, for they had asked me to go with them; but I refused because Uncle Crayston wanted me to go with him; and, besides, I wanted to be sure about being back early. Now, do you think you could manage to find room for me just for a mile or two; we should catch up the Glenfillan Bruffs very soon, with their pair of fat white post-horses. You see I can't go by myself. Perhaps, when ladies have votes, and become members of Parliament, I may be able to go off alone in a hansom, and bet in the ring; but it won't quite do at present. Do

you know I am really quite ashamed to ask you; but you can put me anywhere if you can only manage to take me a mile or two, just to catch them up. It's so very provoking to have let them go like that."

In the space of about a second the following considerations passed through Sherborne's mind :

" What a horrible combination of circumstances! Really, the state of that person's mind who can feel a mild satisfaction in helping to place such an underbred oppressive woman as that in society, and make society be pleased at it, as my ponderously exclusive, plain, and pompous neighbour, Lady Ledchester seems to be doing, is inconceivable. Well! she's a woman, so I can't be rude—to say nothing of the votes that Linus Jones can get."

This internal soliloquy, as well as Hermione's address, and Crayston's feeble protests against being made responsible for her extemporised facts, had come to an end before the door was opened. Sherborne looked up once more at the drawing-room windows, composed his countenance, and said with an effort which he failed to conceal—

" I am so glad to be of any use to you. If

I had known I could have called at your house for you."

"Oh! thank you so much," said she, preparing to get out of the brougham, and holding herself in prompt readiness for eventualities. She had set her mind on the box place.

"It's all right," thought Sherborne. "She will talk and keep the people occupied. I am glad she came."

At that moment the door opened wide and square, and a burly butler stood in the centre of the open space, with his eyes very much open, as if something unusual had disturbed the course of events natural to that hour of the day, an hour at which a bonnet-box, rather than a four-in-hand, might be expected.

"The old fellow looks all alive," thought Sherborne. "I dare say he feels more interest about the race than I do—which wouldn't be much, by the bye."

But the butler walked down the steps, looking impressed. Sherborne began to feel uncomfortable at this portent. "Something must be wrong," thought he. Then he turned pale, or thought that he did so, and half expected to see Lady Fyfield looking at him round the corner of Chesterfield Street.

The butler came close to the drag, and

planted his feet at an obtuse angle firmly; then, looking up with a pair of expanded eyes, quite round and expressively blank, he put forth an inarticulate sound that boded no good to Sherborne's proximate hopes—a sound between a mumble and a whisper, very suggestive of mishaps, to say no worse.

"And the doctor has just been again," were his first intelligible words.

"Been again? Why, what *is* the matter?" said Sherborne.

"Yes, sir. He came last night when she was first taken," answered the butler, rubbing his thumb-nails with his two forefingers.

"But who—what?"

"He said he couldn't tell for certain, sir; and it mightn't be anything, only a feverish cold; but there was a good deal of scarlet fever going about."

"But who is it?"

"Miss Arden, sir."

"If it's only such a very slight attack, can't Sir Roger and—" was the fragment of a remedial suggestion that rushed into Sherborne's mind; but, at the same instant, the butler, as if reading the surreptitious thought, went on to say:—

"And of course, sir, they can't leave her;

I *should* say, they wouldn't like to ; and Sir Roger, he told me to tell you how sorry he was he couldn't come down to see you on account of being afraid to give the infection, if it turn out to be anything catching."

"Oh ! for goodness' sake don't let anybody bring fevers about," exclaimed Hermione. The fear that produced those ebbs and flows of colour was of an angry kind—a panic demonstration against things hostile to enjoyment.

Sherborne bowed his head, set his teeth, and looked back towards the brougham.

"I think we had better start," he said in measured tones of cold courtesy, muttering to himself afterwards, "Was it not enough, without this ? "

Hermione, perceiving that no one manifested any intention of bringing fevers about for her particular annoyance, became at once equal to the occasion.

"We will follow you in the brougham to Lord Oxborough's," said she to Sherborne ; and then aside to Crayston, who was about to suggest that she might as well mount the drag then and there, "No ! I *can't* do that. I *wonder* you don't know better than to propose such a thing. Really, it's so *very* odd of you."

Crayston upraised his chin, tried to look as

if he had not heard what she said, and handed her into the brougham.

"I suppose she will insist upon sitting on the box," said Sherborne to himself, half aloud.

Just as he was going to drive away from the door a carriage pulled up alongside. It was Lord Oxborough's.

"I thought it would make you late," said Lord Oxborough, "if you had to go all round out of your way for us; and I had heard, too, that Miss Arden was ill."

"*They* knew it, and *I* didn't," thought Sherborne.

"So we had better mount here," added Lord Oxborough, getting out of the carriage. "Oh! how is Miss Arden?"

The butler answered as before, and the process of mounting the drag began.

"I am so fond of horses—I quite dote on them," said Hermione. "Do let me see the driving now!" And without waiting for a reply she then took her place on the box, arranging herself in a permanent sort of way, without any apparent reference in her own mind to catching up the Glenfillan Bruffs and their fat white post-horses.

But Sherborne had not yet had the full

measure of what he was to go through at that door. Just as he was driving away there appeared at one of the drawing-room windows Sir Roger and Winifred Arden, whilst Miss Hermione Crumps was exclaiming audibly, “How delightful!” The image of Count de Bergerac rose up before his mind’s eye, and in reference thereto he said to himself bitterly—

“‘ Oh ! that he were here to write me down —an ass ! ’ ”

He was not aware that Lady Fyfield could have done that service for him ; yet so it happened. She was in the house all the time, and from a bedroom window had seen him driving off with Miss Hermione Crumps on the box. Unfortunately, in the interests of retributive justice, he saw her not ; but then he felt sure that she would hear of it, which was almost as bad.

What became of the Glenfillan Bruffs and their fat white post-horses no one ever knew. Certain it is that Sherborne’s drag never caught them up, and doubts have been thrown on the fact of their having gone at all. Indeed one disagreeable person said that they were seen by the curate of their own parish at the Royal Academy, between eleven and

twelve o'clock, examining a portrait of the Bishop of Ledchester's wife.

Sherborne was dull and monosyllabic for the first five miles; but afterwards, remembering the social amenities, and not forgetting the importance of popularity to himself, he made a great effort, and caused Hermione to decide in her own mind that her brother-in-law, Linus Jones, would have to work well for Sherborne at the election, under penalty of having his life made a burden to him mildly. Indeed, he exerted himself much, made favourable impressions generally, and dined at Lord Oxborough's afterwards, where he did the same.

But he left town by an early train next morning, for he said to himself—

“I can't stand looking like a fool to myself. Other people may be wrong—and they generally are, and I can despise their opinion; but I can't deal with myself in that way.”

Yet he could deal with himself in that way when his conscience was accusing him of folly immeasurable in degree, infinite in the importance of its consequences.

CHAPTER X.

“I do perceive here a divided duty.”

Othello.

MARY ARDEN’s illness turned out to be typhus fever. Many ingenious conjectures were hazarded, and learned theories put forth, as to the cause of it ; but no one was the wiser for them, except, perhaps, the next Social Science Congress.

It was a hot and vapoury morning in the last week of July when Sir Roger and his daughter left the house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, for Bramscote. There was no perceptible atmosphere, but a heavy smell of drains. At every tenth door there was a railway van, or a cab, and at half the remaining houses the blinds were down. To the many who, in one set or another, with comparative ease, or pitifully straining, had gone through the joyless excitement of a London season, as London seasons now are,

it might have been said, for that year, as the croupier of a roulette table says to the disappointed gamblers before him, “Le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus.”

Miss Hermione Crumps was energising in divers country-houses about this time, first where a Catholic lady had made a mixed marriage, and imbibed mixed principles therefrom, to the greater edification of Hermione ; next at the Rectory, where dwelt the Archdeacon of Ledchester, with his wife, and Ethel, and Amy, and the rest, who met her at Exham Road Station in a wagonette as before ; then to the Glenfillan Bruffs for the month of August. After that date she intended to be a frequent guest at Monksgallows, Lord Ledchester’s place, together with the *entrée* at Bramscote, which she had gained in Charles Street by local assumption, based on success elsewhere.

Crayston was at Baden-Baden, devoting himself to British tuft-hunting and Continental Liberalism in equal proportions.

Lord and Lady Oxborough and their two daughters were refreshing themselves at Brighton for ten days, taking their pleasure sadly, as Froissart says. The eldest son had gone to fish in Norway, and, if he had not left it, he lived there still ; but, as we have nothing

to do with the sons, it is hardly worth while to inquire about them.

Lord Ledchester was at that moment making a speech against the Ritualists in a town-hall somewhere, and his wife was on her way to Monksgallows, having been kept in England by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, just as she was starting for Schwalbach.

Of Sir Roger Arden's two sons, the elder had gone home for a volunteer review, and the younger was being coached for the army.

A hot and vapoury morning it was. The peculiar odours of London were obtrusive, and ozone nowhere. Nondescript men hung about corners, listlessly staring at whatever happened to be before them; young ladies looked pale and restless amid heaps of luggage and clouds of ball-dresses; fathers of families paid bills pensively. Refreshing was the contrast when Sir Roger's two daughters came forth to begin their journey. Even Mary Arden, who had but just recovered from typhus fever, looked fresh by comparison—

“Pallida no, ma più che neve bianca.”

Just as they were starting, Lady Fyfield pulled up in a hired brougham.

"I thought I should catch you as I went by," said she. "I wished to know if you feel at all stronger?"

"As much so as I can expect," said Mary Arden. "I shall be better when I have had a little change of air. But how are you, after all your kindness to me, which I can never forget?"

"As well as possible," interrupted Lady Fyfield. "I leave town to-morrow, as you know, so that I hope we shall meet before long. Well, good-bye, I must not detain you, or you will be late for the train."

"Yes!" thought she, as she drove away, "as well as possible, but in a difficulty."

Her difficulty was a complex one, and the way out of it was not apparent. It was this:—She had begun to suspect that Mary Arden looked upon her engagement to Sir Bertram rather as a duty than a choice, or more correctly speaking, as a choice of will rather than inclination.

Now, if Lady Fyfield had not been a woman she would not have thought about it at all, for she would not have gone the way to discover those causes of suspicion which had set her thinking. Of the things that a woman is sure to do, and a man will probably not do, reading

letters aloud in the interest of the writer's affections is one. The reason is, that women can, and men cannot, realize an affection external to themselves. Lady Fyfield had received three or four letters from Sir Bertram since her arrival in London the latter end of May, and had repeated their contents to Mary Arden in such a manner that they certainly did not lose by the reading. The effect on her whom they most concerned might truly be called conspicuous by its absence.

"I am afraid she has made up her mind to go through with it," thought Lady Fyfield, "and not allow herself to feel anything either way. I have suspected as much at times, but the suspicion has always passed away. It was the——"

The hired brougham stopped with a shock and a jolt before the door of a shop. She got out, and presently got in again, carrying a receipted bill in her hand. Then she went on thinking from where she had left off.

"It was the typhus fever that put me wrong: I thought it accounted for her being so impassive apparently. I said to myself:—When people are weakened by illness, they often seem as if they cared for nothing. But she was not so ill as that when I read out the last letter. She was pretty well then."

On went Lady Fyfield from one shop to another, paying bills, or endeavouring to have them sent in before she left London—and if she succeeded, she did more than any one else has ever done: but she thought of the difficulty all the time, as much as any one can think when placed in a low rattling brougham, jerked about by a weedy, half-broken cart horse, all head and legs, while bills, receipts, addresses, notes, and parcels are strewing both seats, and the coachman is continually turning the creaky vehicle on its own axis, having missed the right door, or encountered a brewer's dray in front of it.

When at last she had finished her business, and was driving home, the interrupted thoughts began again, as before, where they had been broken off.

“Yes, she was pretty well then. There is something—somebody.”

As this word “somebody” formed itself in her mind, the ball at Bramscote came before her, as if in a picture. A brass band and a fire-engine dispelled the pictorial recollection; but Moreton's face, as she had seen it for a moment at that ball, was in the picture. Her acquaintance with him was of the slightest, just sufficient to measure Sir Bertram by; and

she did measure Sir Bertram, her son, measured him without favour, though the tears welled up with a rush, burning her eyelids.

“And I have had such hopes for him,” was the first thought that followed in words—“oh! such high hopes for him! For I knew what she was, and I thought that I knew what he might become—*would* become, *must* become, if she could care about him. And Sir Roger would like it, and would not like the other, I should suppose; and she, I know, feels herself in a manner bound.

“But she must *not* feel herself bound. She must *not* be sacrificed if,”—and here a mother’s partiality pleaded hard—“if it really would be a sacrifice.”

Then did Lady Fyfield weigh *pros* and *contras* in this fashion:—

“She consented of her own free will.”

“Yes; but was there no pleading? Were there no appeals?”

“Granted that there were. She has too much force of character to have been overpersuaded against her——”

“What? her inclination? But a girl has no inclination that way before she has cared for some one.”

“Well—against her disinclination. She

has too much character to have been over-persuaded against that."

"I don't know. She only consented conditionally."

"Just so; and therefore, if she had afterwards become averse to it, she would have said that she was; and she did not; and so, perhaps——"

"No! I don't think she would before his return. Her decision was to depend on what he should be then."

"But if she had any consciousness of a disinclination, she would naturally say so——"

"No! not if the shadow of an unbidden preference crossed it."

Here ended this internal colloquy and the drive too: but the former was afterwards continued with results not more conclusive than before.

CHAPTER XI.

“Would’st thou have that
Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting I dare not wait upon I would,
Like the poor cat i’ the adage ?”

Macbeth.

THE Italian party of action, or permanent disturbance, had long haunted the government at Florence in words practically equivalent to those of Lady Macbeth, with the addition of much fustian and not a little blasphemy. These taunts the government parried in various ways, according to circumstances, loudly protesting meanwhile its honourable intentions wherever there was a necessity for doing so; but when France lay prostrate, while Spain was in the throes of Revolution, and Austria could make no sign, even to stay the accomplishment of her own humiliation, they seized upon Rome,

without cause of war, without pretended cause of war, without declaration of war, like pirates—only they had no fighting, or housebreakers when the police are out of the way.

That was what they did, and England openly approved of the deed—poor deluded England! blinded by the wretched heresy which has so often warped the instincts of noble natures, and paralysed common sense. May God in His infinite mercy avert from England the probable consequence of the moral support she has given to a crime that has no name, because it sins against every natural virtue and most of the commandments.

It is impossible to mention the fact that Moreton was at Rome on the 20th of September, of disgraceful memory, 1870, without saying thus much; but we are not going to enter into details. They stand recorded, and those who know them not may know them if they will. It is but incidentally that the subject has any business here at all.

Moreton, as we have seen, had left England in the month of November, intending to enter into the Pontifical Zouaves without delay, and giving three practical reasons to himself for

so acting, viz., that he could be of more real use in that way than in any other, that he had no conflicting duty elsewhere, and that, therefore, the sooner he did what he intended to do the better; but he did delay, nevertheless, and for a reason which he put into plain language thus, when about halfway between Folkestone and Boulogne :—

“ If I go there so soon it will be set about that I took the step out of disappointment ; and a lot of people will grin and whisper, and say that so-and-so became a monk and so-and-so a nun for the same reason, and generalize from it, for the instruction of those whom they can influence. Of course, I know that all this is done continually ; but I won’t give them the chance of telling more lies of that sort, if I can help it. I will wait a little. No ! I won’t ! if I had not delayed before, I should not have had all this misery come upon me—it serves me right ; and, after all, no one can say that I go on account of her, for no one but Sir Roger knows anything about it. Yes ! but people always do find out somehow, and—I don’t care for myself, but I *do* for her. If I cared less I should not be shilly-shallying in this way.”

The result was that he travelled through

North Italy, caught rheumatic fever somewhere in Lombardy, and was crippled by it so long that he did not arrive in Rome till the second week of the following September.

"Better late than never," thought he. "Thank God I am here at last. But where are the barracks? I mean, which is which? And what regiment shall I enlist in? I ought to have seen all about that before I left England, but I can easily find it out. I wonder what the Italian for orderly room is."

He had just been set down at the hotel, and was hesitating whether to carry out at once the purpose for which he had come, or wait an hour.

"I am tired, and have hardly washed the dust off," he said to himself. "But I have been delayed, and these are no times for delay. I will not dine till I have offered myself to some regiment or other. I wish I could come across a stray Zouave."

He had not gone far before he stopped and looked, and looked again at the face and figure of a young man who was coming towards him

"Surely," he thought, "that must be Count de Bergerac. But what business has he to be

in plain clothes? And at such a time as this too! I am afraid there really must be something wrong."

And in an instant all these possibilities occurred to him: "Is he an impostor who has taken in Lady Fyfield by passing himself off for a while, here, or elsewhere out of England, as somebody else? Has he been in the Pontifical army, and kicked out as a black-guard? or was he never in it at all? Or is he an Italian freemason who got himself in for the purpose of doing mischief, and was got rid of as soon as he was found out? Or is he a black sheep of a good family—or a scamp who has set up as a Regenerator of Society?"

The object of these rapid and, if it were possible, simultaneous questions, drew nearer, and looking up, appeared to recognize Moreton. Moreton oscillated between justifiable curiosity and aversion. To know all about the man who was, or had been, engaged to a sister of Mary Arden, and of whom he had heard such unpleasant things unwillingly, he would have gone far, and risked much; but an English gentleman has a special repugnance to having his name associated with any kind of adventurer. He looked at the plain clothes,

remembered how well-attested the unpleasant story had been, said within himself, “Black sheep or impostor?” and instinctively drawing back acknowledged a momentary temptation to retreat.

But by this time Count de Bergerac, true or false, was close to him, and evidently intended to speak.

“I think I had the pleasure of meeting you,” said he in French, “at——”

“Bramscote,” said Moreton, adding in his own mind, before the word was quite pronounced, “What a fool I was to put it into his head!”

“Bramscote,” repeated the other man almost simultaneously.

“He didn’t hesitate about the name of the place,” thought Moreton. “But the plain clothes won’t do, here, and at such a time.”

“Last November,” said the suspected one, seeming unconscious that there was any question about his identity.

“He *must* be the man, or how could he know that?” thought Moreton, as certain people said of the Tichborne Claimant. “But I don’t feel that it is all right. What shall I say to catch him if he is an impostor? Yes,” said he aloud, “you left the same day as I did.”

"Yes, I believe I did," answered the other quite naturally.

"You were in the Zouaves, I remember," said Moreton, looking hard at the plain clothes.

"Yes, and so I am now. I see you are puzzled at finding me in plain clothes. The fact is, I have been on sick leave. I caught the Roman fever in the summer, and I have been on the hills to get rid of it. I am not well yet; but I had to come back at once and as quickly as I could, for Cadorna, they say, is on the march, though Visconti Venosta declared but three weeks ago that an attack on Rome would be contrary, not only to the September Treaty, but to the common rights of nations."

"This is all very well," thought Moreton. "But it sounds a little too much like a newspaper—in the way he says it, at least. I wish I had seen more of him—or the other man, whichever it was that I met at Bramscote. But I had very little conversation with him. He was generally talking to Miss Winifred Arden, and when he was not, he was rather silent, naturally. And after the second day I took very little notice of the people. Somehow I think that fellow is not quite like the

man I met there ; but I don't know. I have only one clear impression of that visit—one only."

"Which way are you going ?" said his companion, who seemed rather ill-at-ease, but unwilling to leave him.

"I have come here to serve in the Pontifical army—the Zouaves, I suppose :" answered Moreton. "Will you go with me to the barracks where you are quartered ? I want to offer myself at once. I shall bring him to book now," thought he, feeling much pleased at his own sharpness.

"Oh ! yes—certainly," said the other. "Of course I will. But do you mind going a little later ? I thought of dining before I went. I started early this morning. I will call for you afterwards."

"He is ready to go. It *must* be all right as to his identity," thought Moreton. "I will ask him to dine with me. I shall be better able to judge in that way than out in the street," so he said.

"Come and dine with me at the hotel where I have put up."

The invitation was accepted, not quite without hesitation, and they turned their steps towards the hotel.

"He must be the same man," thought Moreton. "But how about that story? I hope—for her sake, for the honour of the Pontifical army, I hope it *is* all right. But I am afraid there is a screw loose, a something wrong somehow."

"Which way did you come?" asked the object of his doubts.

"By Civita Vecchia," answered Moreton, as they came in front of the hotel.

Leaving his mysterious friend, or whatever the suitable term might prove to be, in the room where they were going to dine, he hurried away to have a bath, and change his clothes.

"Poor fellow!" he thought, when he hurried back. "If his happiness has been imperilled by a report, I pity him with all my heart, and I will do all I can to save him. It is not always possible to disprove accusations."

"I am sorry to have kept you so long," he said, as he entered the room.

"I think you have been very quick," answered the man of questioned identity. "I have been reading a newspaper which I had in my pocket."

"Nothing good in the way of news, of course?"

"No, indeed. The day before yesterday a telegram came from Passo di Correse, saying that the Italian army was concentrating there, with everything ready for invasion."

"There are some things that no amount of experience can teach one to expect," said Moreton. "So Codorna commands this—— I can't give it a name, for there is no name that can express the comprehensiveness of its villainy. And who else is there?"

"Bixio has been given the command of flying squadron."

"Bixio—Bixio, the ex-Garibaldian," said Moreton meditatively. "Bixio, who hates Christian Rome as the fiends of hell hate it. That looks badly. There are some men who never come to the front except when the devil sees an opportunity. I have heard that some Italian officers were arrested here last month disguised as pedlars, and all sorts of blackguards have been sent in with false passports to get up demonstrations and pretended rows to give an excuse to the Government for interfering *à la Cavour.*"

"Yes," answered the other. But he shrugged his shoulders; whereat Moreton looked very hard at him.

Just then a waiter said, "In tavola," and

the conversation was for a while rather desultory, with intervals of silence. Moreton was in a meditative mood, and his companion seemed more or less reserved.

"I am glad I didn't fall in with them," said Moreton. "It might have been awkward."

"Very awkward, indeed. Did you come from Florence?"

"No. I have been staying at Spezia, and I came by steamer from Genoa. I have had rheumatic fever."

"Did you find Spezia a good place?"

"Sea air is always good, I believe, for that sort of thing. There are plenty of better places, but then they are farther off, and I wanted to be here as soon as possible. Shall we start?"

It was growing dusk, and Moreton, not unmindful of the peculiar institution which makes localities unsafe where itinerant patriots are likely to be found energising on their own account, felt carefully for a certain toy pistol which he had secreted in a coat pocket. He had brought it from England, saying to himself, "In case of accidents," and had stowed it in a breast pocket with his pocket-handkerchief while travelling.

"It is time to load it now," thought he;

“but not in this room : it would make the waiter take me for an assassin, if he should happen to come in.”

He went into his bedroom, took one of three or four cartridges from another pocket, loaded the pistol, and, replacing it, returned to his companion.

The streets were almost deserted, and the few people they met were not prepossessing—especially one who passed them at a slow pace, with a hooded cloak thrown over his left shoulder, and a *Speranza d'Italia* hat slouched over a mass of very black hair. He appeared to be of no particular age, country, or class, and had a countenance that would have made him an invaluable model for a fancy portrait of the foul fiend.

Moreton saw at once what he was. “Keep your eye on that fellow,” he said, putting his hand into the pocket where the toy pistol was. “Our lives are of use just now.”

“There is no occasion for that,” said the other, curling his lip with a sarcastic smile, but turning very pale. The stranger fixed his eyes on each of them successively as he passed ; and an awful pair of eyes they were. Moreton was a resolute man, and had an old-fashioned contempt for foreign conspirators,

whom he was in the habit of classing generically as blackguards, but he shuddered at those eyes ; his hair felt as if it were stiffening, and the blood seemed to freeze in his veins. It was not the force of their fixed ferocity that could affect him in so strange a manner, nor the glare of evil passions making human nature horrible : the one would not have seemed strange, the other could not have been felt. Nor, indeed, was it the character of the eyes alone. It was the preternatural malignity symbolised in every feature, from which all human expression, even the very worst, had disappeared.

“ Is this the devil, waiting about to welcome Cadorna ? ” thought Moreton, repressing the shudder, and looking hard at the man, not without a painful effort. “ One ought to be in a state of grace to meet *him*, whoever he is—Hullo ! ”

This last word was called forth by a sudden suspicion, unexpected, ambiguous, embarrassing. His companion had apparently been recognized by this man ; and such a recognition would raise awkward difficulties with regard to the former, affecting his identity, as well as his character, worse than before. Moreton looked round instantly to see whether there was any

sign of recognition on his part, and then gave a rapid glance back at the regenerator of society.

"The Sect," said Moreton half aloud. "He is under the thumb of that scoundrel."

"Who are *you*?" said the regenerator in a bullying tone.

"What business is that of yours?" answered Moreton, keeping his eye on him, and bringing out the toy pistol unostentatiously, yet so that it could be seen. The man glared at him like a tiger, and said—

"I suspect that you are one of those foreign ——" (here he brought out a volley of blasphemous and impure words) "who come to keep that——"

"Don't say that again," said Moreton, putting the pistol in his pocket, and showing a decided disposition to hit out with his left in case of a repetition.

The man passed on, casting back sideways a look of hatred such as the countenance of an Italian freemason only is capable of expressing—the diabolical hatred which grows out of habitual sin against light.

"I shall have my revenge on some of you before long," he said: "on you, perhaps. Your protectors, the French, are *hors de combat* now. We shall meet again, Papalino——"

The remainder of the sentence may perhaps be better imagined than described, but is still better unimagined.

"A pleasant sort of a customer," thought Moreton. "And he has some sort of power over De Bergerac. It must be because De Bergerac is one of the Sect—willing or victimized. And that accounts for his loafing about in plain clothes, and telling cock-and-bull stories about returning from sick leave. I don't believe there is anything the matter with him. But here he is, going with me to the barracks where he is quartered, or pretending to do so—I wonder which it is?"

Never had Moreton been in so difficult a position. What was he to think? What was he to do? De Bergerac was voluntarily accompanying him quietly to the barracks in spite of the very suspicious recognition. Did that indicate hardened guilt, or unconscious innocence, or the force of necessity? What was he to do? Report it? But was the evidence sufficient to justify such a step? After all it amounted to nothing more than this, that an ill-looking man in the street had apparently given a look of recognition at a Zouave, whose face he might have seen frequently, and that the Zouave had appeared

to recognize—what? the man? There was no proof of that. The man's character? Why, he could not have failed to do so. Not report it then! Not report a grave suspicion that could not be reasoned away—a grave suspicion that one of the Sect was actually serving in the Pontifical Zouaves!

"What!" thought he, "allow such a suspicion to pass, for fear of looking like a fool if it should be unfounded! Most emphatically, no! But I will just see what he has to say for himself first."

Then, fixing his eyes on his companion suddenly, he said—

"That is one of the Sect—do you know anything of him? He seemed to know *you*."

"I know *who* he is," said the other. "He is, or at least was, a lawyer, I believe, somewhere in the north of Italy, and he has very wild political ideas. But he is not so bad as he seems, I believe. By the bye, talking of lawyers and business, I quite forgot that I have some business this evening—tiresome business it is, for somebody else. Now what is to be done? The fact is, I shall be some time. I almost think you had better stop at the hotel to-night, and come to the barracks to-morrow morning. What do you think?"

"Well," thought Moreton. "After all, I must have gone back there; and I may just as well go by myself. But it looks very odd —this important business all of a sudden, and his never thinking about it till after he had seen that man. I wonder whether he wants to get rid of me; and if so, why?"

"Good-night, then," said his companion. "À demain."

"Stop a moment," said Moreton. "I can wait for you outside while you do your business. I want to smoke a cigar." And he looked at him with square eyes fixedly, that expressed some such British remonstrance as this:—

"If you are trying to play the fool with me, you had better say so, and let us understand each other." But he failed to extract that information. The reply being:—

"I am afraid it is impossible. It was very stupid of me not to have remembered that engagement before I had brought you so far."

"Oh! as to the distance," said Moreton, making his eyes still squarer—"the distance is nothing. *But!*"

He broke off significantly, and stood significantly still, facing his ambiguous acquaintance. The answer was:—

"You see, perhaps I shall be three hours there. I should like to stroll back with you first as far as the hotel, but I see by my watch that I am half an hour later than I said I would be when I made the engagement."

He walked away briskly; but Moreton shouted after him in a voice that brought heads to the nearest window:—

"But, I say—you have never told me what barracks I am to go to, and where they are."

The ambiguous young man took a card out of his card-case, wrote a direction on the back, and giving it into Moreton's hand, hurried on, saying again, "À demain." Moreton walked quickly back, soliloquizing thus:—

"Here is his card, and here is the direction; and he keeps on saying, 'À demain.' Well! he *may* have had an engagement, and forgotten it; he *may* have nothing to do with that half human fiend we met just now. It *may* be so, but somehow I don't believe that it is. God give me prudence in this matter!" And while instinctively beginning a *memorare*, he reached the hotel.

CHAPTER XII.

“Homo ad duos res, intelligendum et ad agendum, est natus.”
CICERO.

THE next morning Moreton woke up suddenly, feeling, as it were, stung by a sharp recollection of his evening’s experiences, and of the dilemma in which they had placed him. Thought he :—

“Either De Bergerac is, or is not, what I suspect him to be. If he is, I don’t see how I am to prove that he is; if he is not, it will be very hard lines on him to bring the matter forward. In either case I shall do no good, and put myself in a false position. ‘Therefore,’ says human respect, calling itself prudence, ‘leave it alone.’ But then if he is, I shall have done my duty, whether I succeed or fail in proving it; if he is not, I shall equally have done it, if I have sufficient grounds for thinking that he is. It may be a wrong judgment, but it isn’t a rash one. Therefore, I

ought to act at once. Not quite so fast! There is room for a little distinguishing here. I shall have done my duty whether I succeed or fail in proving it, provided that I take reasonable precaution. But to act at once, without knowing more than I know at present, would not be taking reasonable precautions. Therefore, I ought to wait, and see a little more of him before I do anything about it."

This process of reasoning, and the act of opening his eyes, were co-instantaneous. A little common sense is a wonderful epitomiser of arguments, and a good logician withal.

One more question suggested itself, and occupied about the same length of time in answering as the others, though, like them, it cannot be transcribed in so compressed a form. In words it amounted to this:—

"I suppose they have an early drill—I wonder when it will be over. I don't know, and don't know how I can know, so I must take my chance about it."

And, taking his chance accordingly, after having first heard Mass at the nearest church, he enlisted in the Zouaves before the day was much older.

At the first available moment De Bergerac sought him out with evident pleasure.

"We met at Bramscote," began De Bergerac, finding himself looked at in a manner suggestive of doubts. "That's just what he, or the other fellow, said yesterday evening," thought Moreton. "*Is* he the other fellow?"

"How late did they keep up the ball," said De Bergerac. "I had to leave at one o'clock to catch the mail train."

"He is not at all embarrassed, and he says nothing at all about yesterday evening. "What does it all mean?" thought Moreton, half inclined to question the evidence of his own senses. "Could I have gone to sleep and dreamed it all? No; I remember going out and coming in, unless I dreamed that too. I suppose I am all right in my head. I feel cool and collected enough."

And he began to fumble for his pulse, to assure himself that he was not in a fever, De Bergerac, in the mean while, looking on with a peaceful countenance but a sad one. Thought Moreton, in the space of a second or two:—

"There was a subdued agitation in his countenance and manner yesterday, but not now, and he says nothing about having met me then. And why did he speak French then, and very good English now? And how

comes it that he speaks English so well—almost without a foreign accent? I like the look of him to-day. Perhaps, after all, it was only his own private affairs that made him look queer; and, if he knows, by this time, what I heard against my will in Sir Roger's room, it certainly is enough to make any one look queer. Perhaps he had just heard it—just got a letter about it. I hope it *is* all right, but—I wish I could account for that ill-looking fellow in the cloak staring so hard, and seeming to know all about him.”

De Bergerac sustained the beginnings of their conversation, which at first consisted of detached sentences, with varying intervals of silence. Moreton looked at him from time to time with square eyes, but gained no information thereby. At length, after a desultory talk on the news of the hour, De Bergerac said rather suddenly—

“I wish to speak with you alone—now, while I have time to do so—on a matter of serious importance to myself and, perhaps, to others.”

He spoke in a deliberate manner, neither hurrying through his words nor dwelling on them overmuch; but he changed colour more than once as he spoke, and his voice trembled.

Moreton began to listen actively, with sharpened attention ; and into his mind there rushed a torrent of questions beginning with “ I wonder.” “ I wonder whether he is going to tell me that he has been taken in by the Sect, and is afraid to break with them—or to pretend that he has nothing to do with them, and give some reason why that ragamuffin stared at him—or to assure me that Italian freemasons are very honest fellows, calumniated owing to misapprehension on the part of the Pope ill-informed—or to say that he has been cut by the Ardens, and ask if I have heard anything about him.”

“ In a few hours you or I, or both of us, may be either shot or bayoneted,” said De Bergerac.

“ Nothing more likely,” said Moreton ; adding within his own mind, “ I have been to confession and communion this morning ; I may save a better and a more useful man, one whose life is of value to others, and I shall certainly die in the holiest cause that a man can die for.”

“ Nothing more likely,” he repeated, and then relapsed into silence, waiting reservedly to hear more.

“ Or be murdered by some of the Sect if

Cadorna gets in," said De Bergerac. "He will be followed by a train of them—not to mention the sweepings of the prisons."

"You seem to know a good deal about the Sect," said Moreton.

"I should think I did," was the reply, spoken with decision and emphasis, but with a simplicity of manner that made Moreton feel half ashamed of having suspected him.

"You have seen something of them—have you?" said he in as careless a tone as he could command.

"Yes, I have," answered De Bergerac. "More than I want to see again."

"I dare say. But was it as bad as what one hears of?"

"I don't know how much you have heard; but have you read '*L'Ebreo di Verona*?'?"

"Yes, I have, and I believed it on the authority of the writer; yet often it required all my confidence in Father Bresciani's word to make one believe such things possible."

"Well, all I can tell you is, that Father Bresciani has understated his case. Perhaps you will be able to judge for yourself some day. Anyhow, the less you see of them the safer for yourself. But I must say what I wanted to say—now, while there is time;

for who can tell, from day to day, what may happen?"

"Very well. And I was just going to ask you a question."

Moreton felt a strong impulse to press the question, which of course was about the man in the cloak; but it occurred to him that it would be better to hear first what De Bergerac had to say, because then (so he more prudently reasoned) he would know better how to proceed.

"What I wanted to say," said De Bergerac, "was this——"

And then he paused, looking for the first time a little embarrassed, while Moreton again squared his eyes at him, for fear of being taken in. The silence was brief, but emphatic. De Bergerac broke it.

"I met you first at Bramscote," he said.

"I wish he would say something about where he met me next, and who it was that we fell in with by the way," thought Moreton, making a gesture of assent.

"Did you hear anything said about me at any time by any one?" said De Bergerac.

"I heard that you were engaged to Miss Winifred Arden," answered Moreton prudentially.

"Yes. But did you hear nothing else—nothing against me?"

Moreton hesitated. "What do I know about this man?" he thought. And the story was told before me in confidence."

"I see you have heard it," said De Bergerac. "Have you any objection to tell me what it is?"

"Oh, people are always chattering about somebody's affairs," answered Moreton. "One is always hearing some gossip that goes in at one ear and out at the other."

"I don't think it has gone out at your other ear," said De Bergerac gravely; "and you must excuse me if I persist in the question."

Moreton was favourably impressed by his words and manner, but still hesitated. It was now De Bergerac's turn to look with square eyes.

"May I ask," he said, "why you refuse to do so small an act of charity? Now, just consider what it is you are doing. A lie is told of me in my absence—a lie affecting my character and my happiness: so much I have strong reasons to suspect. However, whatever it is, you heard it, and, when I ask you to tell me what you have heard, in order that I may know how to deal with it, you refuse.

You consent to the calumny by not giving me a chance of disproving it, when you know that I have no other means of finding it out now, and that my life is not worth a day's purchase to an insurance office."

Moreton started at this very idiomatic bit of English. He first remarked to himself parenthetically—

"Perhaps, after all, he will turn out to be an Englishman. I give up attempting to make out who or what he is."

Then in the same kind of parenthesis (for the question as to what he had heard was awaiting its answer all the time) he said—

"Favour my curiosity; I can't help it. But you speak English almost as if you were an Englishman."

"So I am," answered De Bergerac. "But I want an answer to my question."

"In a moment. But how are you English?"

"By being the son of an Englishman."

"But how are you Count de Bergerac?"

"In the female line—from my mother."

"You must have lived in England a great deal."

"I was at ——" *

* The name of the college is not legible in the MS.—[Ed.]

Thought Moreton : “Upon my word it *is* hard on him not to tell him if he is all right ; and if I had not seen that fellow in the cloak look at him so, and——”

“I ask you again : what did you hear about me ? ” said De Bergerac.

“Well, now, what should you do yourself ? ” answered Moreton. “I don’t deny that I heard something about you ; but——”

“You had better say ‘*against* me,’ ” interrupted De Bergerac, “for that is what it was ; I know that.”

“Very well—*against* you ; so it was. But the thing is, it was told before me in an implicitly confidential manner.”

“Nonsense ! I don’t ask you to say who told it, or who was by when it was told, or where it was told, or when. I ask you *what* it was.”

“If it were not for that fellow in the cloak ! ” thought Moreton.

“Did you promise not to tell me or any one else what it was ? ” said De Bergerac.

“No, I didn’t promise,” answered Moreton, halting between two scruples.

“Did the person who told it know that you heard what was said ? ”

“I suppose so. He knew I was there.”

"And didn't ask you to keep it secret?"

"No."

"In what possible way, then, could it be implied that you were bound to hold your tongue about it, at the expense of charity and fair dealing, when the person who told the story volunteered to do so in your presence, and never asked you not to repeat it?"

"Well, no; it was not implied—of course it was not," said Moreton rather suddenly, after a short pause and a final hesitation. "That was not my reason; it was only an excuse."

"You are a cool sort of fellow," said De Bergerac. "And what *is* your reason?"

"*Was*," said Moreton. "I am going now to answer your question, and tell you exactly what I heard about you. But first I must ask you to wait while I——"

"No, I can't wait—really," interrupted De Bergerac. "Tell me the reason afterwards."

"Very well," said Moreton. "What I heard then was this: That you had got money out of an Englishman at Florence—borrowed a hundred pounds and bolted. The man who told this had heard it from a man who told him he had it from the man it happened to."

De Bergerac looked very grave, and said

nothing for a while, but showed no signs of agitation or surprise.

"I have been thinking," he said, or trying to think, "how so circumstantial a lie can have arisen, and I can make nothing of it."

"Nor I," said Moreton, feeling another attack of cautiousness come over him, but throwing it off again instantly.

"*Unless*"—muttered De Bergerac, turning very pale, and adding quickly, "Now for your reason."

"The reason why I was shy of saying much," said Moreton, "was this:—The fact was (I may as well say it at once) I took you for —— No! not exactly that, but I really did, in a way, suspect you of belonging to the Sect."

"Not a very likely position to find one of them in," said De Bergerac.

"No. But it might be, and therefore——"

"Indeed, it might. They have got into strange places. Well?"

"Why, the fact was, I—you puzzled me last night."

"Puzzled you last night? What can you mean?"

"Yes; yesterday evening, when I was walking with you, and we met that—met that cut-throat looking fellow in a hooded cloak."

“Walking with you yesterday evening? Why I haven’t seen you since I left Bramscote—till this morning.”

“Well, I thought it queer: only it was so like you, and you—that is, he, whoever he is, knew me, came up and spoke to me, and talked of having met me at Bramscote. He didn’t seem to know much about the place, by the bye, or the people who were there. And there was another curious thing that struck me as being odd: he was in plain clothes. He said he had just returned from sick leave.”

“I have not been ill, and I have not been on leave since last November, nor out of uniform.”

“That I couldn’t tell for certain. It made me stare, of course, to hear of a private going on furlough in plain clothes; but then I remembered that the privates in the Zouaves are different from others, both in class and in motives of service; so that——”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted De Bergerac. “It might have been—almost anything might be. But I want to know about this man that you met yesterday. Are you sure that he was like me?”

“What *is* the matter with him now?” thought Moreton. “Is it a twin brother gone

to the bad—or himself, after all, unexpectedly confronted with embarrassing evidence? Oh! I hope not—for the honour of the chivalrous corps he serves in.”

“I am quite sure about the likeness,” said Moreton.

De Bergerac took short turns up and down the barrack-yard for two or three minutes; then stopping short, he said—

“I know too well who it must be: and you must be told, as you have seen him; for I owe it to the regiment I serve in—I owe it to the Holy Father, whose uniform I wear, that your mind should be cleared of this suspicion so far as I have power to clear it. A Pontifical Zouave must not be suspected.”

“It was only a passing suggestion of prudence or caution, or perhaps rash judgment,” said Moreton. “Such abominable and out-of-the-way things have happened, that one becomes over-suspicious, out of a habit of necessary self-defence.”

“Certainly,” said De Bergerac. “I don’t blame you—I can’t, for I should have done the same myself. But I have other reasons for telling you what I am going to tell. Such things can’t be too widely known, and by knowing it you may, perhaps, be able to do an

act of charity some day, if you should fall in with him again. The fact is, I have an unfortunate twin-brother, who turned out wild, and who, I have reason to believe, has been got hold of by the Sect. Poor fellow! Just after he had left college, and when I was on the point of setting off to travel, he went to Italy, my father having been ordered there for consumption. It would have been better if he had gone with me, or had had something to do somewhere ; but, as it happened, there he was, with lots of energy and no fixed employment. It was the old story—the story written on the breaking hearts of so many Italian mothers and sisters and wives in these days. Morals, the Sacraments, the priests, the temporal power, were each assailed in turn by a gradually undermining process, beginning with what is frailest in human nature, and most liable to come into practical collision with principles. He went wrong altogether—perhaps the quicker because he had been brought up so Christianly. He went down almost without a struggle, like a young bird out of a nest. It killed my mother. The bitterest day of my life was when I heard that he was at Mentena in a red shirt. I had not returned from my travels then. I heard of it some time

afterwards. I had been travelling in the East. It was a bitter sorrow that—one can hardly imagine a worse."

"If I had only known who he was when I met him yesterday!" said Moreton, feeling half inclined to accuse himself of indifference, because he had not guessed the truth and acted upon the guess. "If I had had any sense at all I should have seen through it, and collared him."

"How could you?" said De Bergerac.

"You may depend on me, if ever I fall in with him again, be the consequences what they may," said Moreton. "But don't you think he may be already wanting to free himself from this diabolical thraldom? It rather strikes me so, judging from what I saw."

"Yes, I do think so. He wrote to me last November—I got the letter at Bramscote—I remember that it came to Lyneham by second post, and was brought to Bramscote with the fish."

He tried hard to smile at this juxtaposition of facts; but the pathos of it overmastered the attempt, and he hurried on.

"I had read it just before dinner," he said, "and I had to talk to a Mrs.—"

“Mrs. Linus Jones, a portentous woman.”

“Very. His letter was touching and fearful ; for I thought that I could see in it the chains he was now struggling to break, now clinging to in despair. I wrote to him at once. I have had no answer.”

“Did you happen to mention my name ?” said Moreton.

“I did. I told him who were there, and described the party, and what we did. I thought it might amuse and interest him. It came into my head that, if I could get him to England, I might, perhaps, have a better chance with him—in the country at least.”

“Ah ! that was how he knew about me, and talked about having met me at Bramscote. But I wonder why he pretended to be you ?”

“I can’t tell at all—unless he had some wavering impulse to break with the Sect, and hoped, that you would somehow help him to do it, in spite of himself. How long was he with you ?”

“He dined with me—that took about an hour altogether ; and then we started as if to come here.”

“How was his manner ?”

“Reserved by fits and starts, with an artificial swagger every now and then. At other

times he was restless—quietly restless. His conduct was odd altogether, in a quiet way. Sometimes I half thought he was going to say something that weighed on his mind. Perhaps I was mistaken, but it struck me so. There were no signs of it after we met a man, evidently one of the Sect, who recognized and seemed to threaten him—that was why I took you for one of them, believing your brother to be you.”

“I see it all,” said De Bergerac. “He didn’t tell you where he lived, of course ?”

“He pretended to be quartered here.”

“What became of him ?”

“He pleaded an engagement; I offered to wait for him, but he said he should be too long; and he went off, leaving me his card. And here it is.”

Moreton pulled the card out of his pocket, and gave it to De Bergerac, who, clutching it nervously, remained silent.

“What is there particular about it ?” said Moreton.

“It is *his* card, not mine. Look at it. There is the Christian name—Henri.”

“We ought to be able to find him,” said Moreton.

De Bergerac shook his head, and seemed

for a while absorbed by many troublous thoughts. At last he roused himself and said—

“ Our army is about eight thousand, in Rome ; all but the city itself being virtually occupied by the enemy. In a few days we shall have upon us sixty thousand men, backed by the whole Italian army, with a population of twenty-five millions to recruit from, and the moral support or toleration of every government in Europe ; for France, even if she were not crushed by defeat, is now ruled by Favre, Crémieux, and Gambetta.”

“ You mean,” said Moreton, “ that unless something should occur which we have no reason to expect, we can die at our posts, but not save Rome. I have seen that all along.”

“ If Cadorna’s army enters here,” said De Bergerac, “ the scum of Italy will follow.”

“ And then”—interrupted Moreton, “ the reign of the seven deadly sins, the apotheosis of evil, hell represented in the persons of its bond-slaves on earth ! But about this story against you. Excuse me, I know the precise injury it is doing. You must write at once to Sir Roger Arden. Have you heard from him ? ”

“ Yes—a put-off for a year on the plea of her youth ; but I could see there was some-

thing more. I wrote again, and had the same sort of answer. The difficulty is, that there is nothing to lay hold of; and he might say ‘Qui s’excuse s’accuse.’”

“Perhaps. Where did you make his acquaintance?”

“I was staying at Dredgemere last October, and met him there. He asked me to Bramscote, and I went. It turned out that Lady Arden was an old friend of my mother’s before either of them married. Do you know Lady Fyfield?”

“Very slightly. Do you know her well?”

“My mother knew her very well, but that will not enable her to be answerable for me.”

“Anyhow, you ought to write, both to her and to Sir Roger. It is sufficient that you have heard of what has been said. By the bye, I remember the year—what a fool I am not to have thought of that before. It was two years ago.”

“Well! that simplifies it, for I was in Rome the whole year.”

“You must go and write those two letters while you are able,” said Moreton. “Don’t delay a moment. It may be the last chance.”

De Bergerac took his advice, and the two letters were posted that same day.

On that same day Count Ponza di Martino arrived in Rome, bearing a letter in which King Victor-Emmanuel informed the Pope that, with the affection of a son, the faith of a Catholic, and the loyalty of a king, he was going to steal his remaining provinces and besiege him in his own city.

CHAPTER XIII.

Macb. How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is't you do ?

All the Witches. A deed without a name.

Macbeth.

WHILE the Holy Father was writing his reply the king's troops had already begun the invasion. Dates often tell strange tales, but never perhaps have they told so foul a one as this.

On the 19th of August, Signor Visconti Venosta, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had said in Parliament : " The obligation of not attacking the frontiers of the Papal States, and of not letting them be attacked, remains in force. And, gentlemen, if this obligation were not confirmed by treaty, it would come under the obligations already provided in the common law of nations, and in the political relations of States." On the 5th of September the

Opinione gave out that it had been unanimously resolved, at a Council of Ministers,* to march on Rome. On the 6th the official gazette contradicted the report, while troops, with pontoons and field telegraphs, were being concentrated on the Roman frontier. On the 9th Count Ponza di San Martino arrived in Rome with the king's letter announcing the fact. On the 10th he delivered the letter; and on the 11th the Holy Father answered it. On that same day Cadorna and Bixio invaded the Roman States on two sides.

It may not be amiss, by the bye, to compare Signor Visconti Venosta's speech on the 19th of August, against the invasion, with the announcement in the *Opinione* on the 16th, that three divisions, under General Cadorna, had been mobilized and sent on the frontiers of the Roman States, at Rieti, Orvieto, and Terni; nor is it uninstructive to notice the coincident facts that the news of Mac Mahon's defeat at Sédan was known in Florence on the 4th of September, the invasion of Rome definitely settled on the 5th,

* "Nel consiglio dei Ministri, tenuto oggi si fu d' avviso, che conveniva risolutamente procedere al compimento del voto della nazione coll' andare a Roma. Il Ministero è unanime."—*L'Opinione*, No. 247.

and the king's letter to the Pope written on the 8th.

The barometric effect of the Franco-Prussian War on the Florentine government is, indeed, remarkable enough—especially the fact that the day after the news of Sédan reached Florence the ministers decided to march against Rome—but less so than the complacency with which it was regarded by the false conscience of Europe. One might have expected from statesmen, from journalists professing high principles, from that majority of influential men implicitly representing their class which, in fact, constitutes public opinion, some sign of disapproval, some indication at least that the public conscience of nations had received a shock. But the public conscience of nations, directed on the Continent by the secret societies, in England by the traditions of Protestantism, endorsed the deed with all its logical consequences—which may God in His mercy avert!

It may be said, not in defence of the deed itself, nor of the manner of doing it, but in comparative extenuation :—Have not these things been done over and over again, only worse, in a manner equally treacherous and much more violent, with acts of personal cruelty into the

bargain? And if one objects, that the active violence and violent treacheries of an age when men sinned by paroxysms, and went to die on ashes, is no criterion for one like the present, when people do their sinning respectably, and think that God ought to be satisfied with a feather-bed contrition, we are met with the fact that as late as the year 1809, Pope Pius VII. was made prisoner by the Emperor Napoleon I., and mentally tortured in every way that the petty malice of a low nature could suggest.

All this is true, but the bombardment of September 20th, 1870, was carried out with a barefaced hypocrisy which has no parallel at all. Mediæval emperors, coveting dominion and swelling with pride, were treacherous as well as violent, and so was Napoleon I.; but they had at least the decency not to talk about the "affection of a son and the faith of a Catholic," when they were preparing to bombard a city.

Our Lord calls the scribes and Pharisees distinctively and emphatically hypocrites, and of no one does He speak so severely as of them.

The details of the bombardment and occupation are consistent with what preceded

them; and people who smiled on the systematic dishonesty of Cavour's worthy successors, and rejoiced complacently over the breach at Porta Pia, deeming it honourable to attack a small state in overwhelming numbers, as soon as the deed could be done without any danger, are consistent in their continued satisfaction, but have virtually abdicated the right to demand honest dealing from any government, or denounce any act of piracy.

The conscience of the British public has been put into a sort of mesmeric sleep by Italian revolutionism, so that in all things concerning Rome, public opinion in England sees black as white. Statements of facts are received with bland incredulity or, what is worse, with a non-apprehension of their meaning, such as would seem incredible if one had not witnessed it. Men and women, conscientious, just, and kind-hearted, listen to the story complacently, as if it were nothing but a collection of words in an unknown language. Nevertheless, facts, as the proverb has it, are stubborn things. The truth cannot be for ever suppressed; for sooner or later the day always comes when even its enemies find their interest in bringing it to light, if its friends are not able to do so. It will not

always be in the power of sophistry to disguise how Rome was entered, how Rome was occupied, how Rome has been kept, how Zouave prisoners were assassinated in cold blood, how criminals were let loose from the prisons to bawl “Morte ai Preti;” how the railway brought crowds into Rome, to personate the Roman people at the plebiscite; how, in spite of the customs of war, and the express terms of the capitulation, Zouaves were put into a common prison, like malefactors, and kept on bread and water; how, in defiance of the same customs of war and terms of capitulation, the Squadaglieri were sent to convict prisons like thieves and murderers; how every guarantee and every stipulation, beginning with that about the Leonine City, has been violated; how the Quirinal was seized, the education of every class made infidel as far as the Government can make it so, the religious houses broken into and robbed, and the monks and nuns driven from their homes, after the king in his letter to the Pope, and the minister in his instructions to Count Ponza di San Martino, had solemnly protested that the act of occupation was to be conservative and protective, and solemnly guaranteed the spiritual independence of the

Holy Father. Hypocrisy has manifested itself in many startling ways to the experience of mankind, but never like this. It remained for King Victor-Emanuel II. to talk about maintaining the spiritual independence of the Pope by driving out his religious orders and giving infidel teachers to his spiritual children.

And who suffer the most from the robbery of religious houses? Not the religious. They can live their interior life elsewhere, or die—not unwillingly. They can say, as the old Carthusian said to Henry VIII.: “Threaten with these things those who wear soft raiments. We fear them not.” It is the poor who suffer the most, who suffered the most in England on a like occasion, who always have suffered, and always will suffer the most from anti-Catholic principles, by whatsoever name they may be called. Widows and orphans are the accusers of those who have done these deeds.

It should not be forgotten that the old families and the majority of the citizens of Rome have refused their consent to the accomplished fact, with the exception of a few individuals, respecting whom one can only say—

“I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
Than such a Roman.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“Adstiterunt reges terræ, et principes convenerunt in unum,
adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus.”—PSALM ii. 2.

YET a moment, and we will pass on from scenes that happily have but a brief and accidental connection with the story we are relating.

When King Victor-Emmanuel bombarded Rome with the affection of a son who takes the first opportunity of robbing his father—the faith of a Catholic who does all in his power to destroy, if it were possible, the faith of his subjects—the honour of a king who has broken every pledge, and the soul of an Italian who put himself under the orders of France first, and then of Prussia—the Holy Father determined to do two things: 1st. To make such resistance as should be sufficient to show before the world that force had been used, and that he had yielded to nothing else but

force; 2ndly. To prevent unnecessary and useless bloodshed, by ceasing to resist as soon as that object should have been attained.

Therefore, when the breach had been made at Porta Pia, the white flag was hoisted at various parts of the city, and the Italian troops entered.

When the heir of the oldest reigning house in Europe first raised his hand against the Holy Father, and the white cross of Savoy, from a symbol of faith and purity, became a badge of persecution and sacrilege, his ancestral dominions passed away by a shameful barter. It may be a fine thing to reign over twenty-five millions by favour of the Masonic lodges, but "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

How the Zouaves behaved is now a matter of history, and any one may learn it from sources that no one can suspect of favouritism.*

At two o'clock on the afternoon of the 20th,

* See, for instance, the *Soluzione*, an extreme Neapolitan newspaper, certainly not to be suspected of partiality to clerical principles: "Modest and brave, they have done their duty as heroes do; and the defence of Rome, as far as they are concerned, has been short, but brilliant. They would all have died—every one of them would have died at their posts, had it not been for the Pope's order to surrender."

the Zouaves were marched into the Piazza di San Pietro. The greater part of the Papal troops passed the night there. In the morning the terms of the capitulation were made known to the army, together with the thanks of the Holy Father, and the General's commendation of their behaviour.

At noon, that chivalrous little army paraded for the last time. The troops were all drawn up in the large square of St. Peter's, when the Holy Father appeared at a window of the Vatican. Colonel Allet, commanding the Zouaves, drew his sword, and exclaimed, "Mes enfants! Vive Pie Neuf!" Then there was a thrilling shout from the gallant and heart-broken little army. They knelt to present arms, and the Holy Father blessed them. When they rose from their knees he was gone.*

* * * * *

They left Rome by the Porta Angelica, laid down their arms in a field near the Pamfili gardens, and marched eight miles to the railway station at Ponte Galera. There they remained until it was dark, when they were crammed into railway carriages, fourteen or

* See "Two Years in the Pontifical Zouaves," by T. Powell, Z.P.

more in a compartment. When they arrived at Civita Vecchia they were sent to different quarters—the English, with some Dutch and Swiss, were put into a convict prison, two-hundred and fifty in a room. The convicts, not political prisoners, but murderers, brigands, and malefactors of all kinds, had been let out, and had gone to Rome, where, with their brethren from other parts of Italy, they afterwards personated the Roman people. Not a drop of water was given to the Zouaves by the authorities till the next day at noon ; but they got a few things through the kindness of some Italian soldiers. About eight o'clock on the evening of that day (the 22nd) seven hundred and fifty of them were sent on board a small steamer, the *Liguria*. Those who were on deck had barely room to lie down ; those who were below fared worse by reason of the heat and closeness. In consequence of the over-crowding it was almost impossible to get a draught of water from the water-butts.

At dark on the 23rd they entered the harbour at Genoa ; but it was decided by the authorities that it was too late for landing, and so they remained on board till the next day.

Finally, the English Zouaves were quartered in the barracks of St. Benigo till the 1st of

October. Many of the Italian soldiers used to come into their rooms to pray. It was impossible to do so in their own, and they were purposely kept at work till it was too late to hear Mass.

At length the English Zouaves embarked on the 1st of October for Liverpool.

The chivalrous little Papal army has ceased to exist, at least for the present; and as for the future—God's holy will be done! But that little army has left a name that will not die, though the whole press of Europe should combine to misrepresent it; and perhaps the greatest act of Christian heroism it ever did was when it capitulated. From no one on earth but the Holy Father would that command have been obeyed. Well—God is strong and patient, and we must try to be so also—at an infinite distance; but the occupation of Rome is hard for a Christian to bear.

CHAPTER XV.

*δέλτον τε γράφεις
 τήνδ', ἦν πρὸ χερῶν ἔτι βαστάζεις,
 καὶ ταῦτὰ πάλιν γράμματα συγχεῖς,
 καὶ σφραγίζεις λύεις τ' ὀπίσω,
 βίπτεις τε πέδῳ πεύκην θαλερὸν
 κατὰ δάκρυ χέων, καὶ τῶν ἀπόρων
 οὐδενὸς ἐνδεῖς μὴ οὐ μαίνεσθαι.*

Iph. in Aul.

WHILST a dingy steamer, redolent of oiled engines and stale brandy, was rolling and pitching somewhere in the stormy waters that lie beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and Moreton, on board the same, lay incapable of thought or action in that abyss of sea-sickness which tempts the sufferer to feel with Macbeth,

“I ’gin to be aweary of the sun,
 And wish the estate o’ the world were now undone,”

there was a disturbance of habits in the house at the Four Ways. Trunks, made when George the Third was king, and ladies “wore short waists,” had been brought from their accus-

tomed corners as if in readiness for use; dresses of no particular fashion, but very black, except where age had rusted them, lay about in provisional disorder. The old servant contemplated the disturbing elements in grim silence, angrily incredulous.

Mrs. Atherstone, having brought out the trunks and black dresses, retired into the little sitting-room where she had received Moreton and Don Pascolini; then she unlocked the old bureau, that she had bought from Mr. Linus Jones, when, on enlarging his nurseries, he had sold some “rubbish” left in the lumber-room by the executor of the late tenant—a circumstance already related with abundant commentaries by Miss Hermione Crumps, during afternoon tea at Sir Roger Arden’s house, in Charles Street, Berkeley Square. Mrs. Atherstone, as we have said, unlocking the old bureau, took from it a leathern portfolio, and sat down to contemplate its contents, from time to time soliloquizing slowly in a voice just audible to herself, as was her custom—a custom which had been almost a necessity of her peculiar solitude.

Out of the portfolio she took, from among a number of old letters and documents of

different kinds, a letter received that morning. “That letter,” she said to herself, “I have read twenty times and more since it came, for fear I should be mistaken. What an old fool I am to bring it out again !”

But she did read it again ; and this is what she read :—

“ DEAR MADAM,

“ As you expressed a great desire to know whether Count de Bergerac was of English extraction or not, and as I promised by your request that I would inform you if it should ever fall in my way to obtain the information you desired, I write to say that I lately met a friend of the family who told me that the count inherited his title from his mother, and that his father’s name was Brabourne—the name assumed by Mrs. Sherborne’s brother. I am happy to have the power of giving you the information you require ; but, at the same time, I must say, as I said before, when you did me the honour to consult me, that such knowledge can be of no practical use. Count de Bergerac may be, and very likely is, the eldest lineal descendant of Mrs. Sherborne’s brother ; but that will not entitle him to the estate, nor give him

any claim on the conscience of the present owner in that respect——”

“And the rest—*haute* consideration, and his name, Domenico Pascolini,” muttered Mrs. Atherstone, folding up the letter. “He has told me just all I wanted to know. That bit of information will go far, I think, to do the work that I have lived for, all these long years that I have inhabited this furnished hovel, weary of existence, and fearing to die. Ay! fearing very much to die.”

She rose from her chair, walked up and down the room restlessly, and went on thinking aloud with intervals of silence. Articulate or silent, her thoughts ran thus:—

“Fearing to die! Ah! no one, of the few who know me, has the least idea—no one, if half the world knew me, would have the least idea, how I fear death. An unspeakable horror comes over me whenever the thought comes into my mind, which it does unbidden and suddenly, sending a prolonged spasm through my heart, and an icy chill all over me, that seems to burn. And then at night, when nothing is heard but the weird-like voices of the wind roaring in the chimney and rushing through the fir-wood—or, still worse, on a summer’s night, calm and full of sound, whilst

I am lying awake, listening painfully to the distant bark of a sheep-dog, or the onward rattle and scream of the mail train, running a race with the time that is passing away. Passing, oh! how it does pass! I sometimes feel a sort of fierce delight in listening to the clock, and thinking how much nearer I am to the end after a few ticks; and I say to myself, ‘What is it that I am regretting? A life of weariness and saddest memories. And what is it that I am using up, while the clock ticks and ticks on, on, on to the end? It is time, which to-morrow may not be, so far as I am concerned.’ I say this to myself and shudder, but most at night. I don’t ask myself these questions in the night. A dread comes over me then—a horrible dread, indescribable, unearthly; and a voice within me seems to say, ‘For you time as yet is. Delay not!’ And then, at length, I fall asleep through weariness, and say to myself in the morning: ‘It was the effect of solitude on a mind imbued with the memories of old sorrows and regrets, and remorse, and morbid meditation.’ And so it was, I suppose; and so it is—must be.”

She stood still for a while, and appeared to be questioning her own conscience; but in fact she was listening to what it forced on her

notice as to the real nature of her belief in her own explanation of the interior voice—listening with comparative repose, and leaning towards it with a true instinct.

And then she listened with a pleasurable fluttering of the will to what another voice told her. It was an interior voice, for it spoke within herself, but it was not she who spoke. The devil suggested, and she listened—listened with the pleasurable flutter which his suggestions always produce when listened to. This conflict of interior voices went on, as it had gone on many times before, thus—only not so much in words as by their equivalent impression :—

Conscience. “I dread death because I dread the judgment, dread the nature of the eternity to follow.”

The Devil, suggesting. “It is the wrench, the collapse of vitality, the mysterious awe, too, engrained in your mind by its training from childhood up.”

Conscience. “I am physically courageous and strong-nerved, and I heard nothing of religion in my childhood that I can remember, except to say collects by heart for punishment.”

The Devil, suggesting. “The force of the old

traditions of Hazeley—old Mrs. Sherborne's romantic stories of the times of persecution, predispose you to accuse yourself of a sort of apostacy in not being a Catholic. It is romance and not conviction, the habit of entering into the religious feelings of others by living in the past rather than in the present when you were at Hazeley."

Conscience. "I dreamed and imagined in the past, as a child who reads fairy tales. I *lived* in the present—I *lived* for *him*. *That* was life: *that* was hope."

The Devil, suggesting. "But it was then that you first felt this inclination, this supposed Grace, which was nothing but an instinctive desire to reconcile his heirship with the claims of the dispossessed heir, in whose cause Mrs. Sherborne had enlisted your sympathies."

Conscience. "It was not that. I resisted the inclination on his account, because I wanted him to be the heir, and hoped that Mrs. Sherborne would not find her brother's son, and because to become a Catholic would have been a hindrance to acting as I *did* act when she sent me to Bramscote to make inquiries. It would have been a hindrance to deceiving her and myself."

The Devil, suggesting. “With his death that impediment ceased, and you had the most powerful incentive of being what he would have been if he had lived (for you know you were a drag on his inclination in that respect) and of praying for his soul, which you could not do as a Protestant.”

Conscience. “No, no! The pride of individual reason, which I have cultivated in a spirit of fierce solitude, has pulled me back, and resentment, increased by remorse, has made me resist.”

The Devil, suggesting. “Perhaps. But if it were the Grace of God you would have no doubt about it. When God offers His Grace He makes it clear and unmistakable.”

Conscience. “And has He not done so? and have I not let something within me, that was not my own feeling, not my own reason, not my own conscience, resist for me with sophistries, and ebullitions of pride, and stumbling-blocks of every kind?”

The Devil, suggesting. “Would God permit something that was not yourself to make His Grace of no effect?”

Conscience (tampered with by rebel habit). “I think I could have prevented this, by resisting the influence of that something within me.

Could I? Yes—no! I have done my best—I pray to do right, and I know that I am very wicked. One must try to do one's duty, and not look out for supernatural signs like a kind of inspiration. I am sure I am not good enough to expect such a thing. It would be presumptuous in me to believe it."

The devil knew better than to make any more suggestions after that, for fear of spoiling his own work.

Mrs. Atherstone then went into her bedroom, and passed the next three-quarters of an hour in a vigorous packing of the black dresses, with their accompaniments great and small. The old servant looked on annoyed, and even tongue-tied with amazement at the unprecedented state of affairs; but at length, just at the end of the three-quarters of an hour, she made her eyes very round, and ejaculated—

"Well, I never!"

Mrs. Atherstone looked up, and her countenance, habitually hard through long disuse of kindlier emotion, began to soften.

"Well, my poor old Susan," she said, "what's the matter?"

The old servant stared stolidly, and wiped her eyes with her apron. She had not realized fully the cause of disturbance.

"Poor old thing!" thought Mrs. Atherstone, smoothing one of the old black dresses in the trunk. "She is slow, sure, and retentive in everything. There is more grief in her than she knows as yet. Strange that she should care about me so much. I suppose it is because I am friendless and queer like herself—no matter how I became so. And perhaps——" (here she paused and gave a sharp tug at a petticoat to make it lie flat in the trunk) "perhaps it is because I have the stronger will; and that gives her a feeling of dependence, and so it makes her fond of me, and faithful, like a pet dog."

"Look here," she said, rising from her hands and knees, "I am afraid these old trunks will never do."

The old servant looked at the trunk, then at her mistress, and then upwards into space, with an expression half appealing, half resentful. The old trunk had been an old friend, a mute companion of her hazy musings, for many a long year, as it lay in a corner of the little room where she sat and stitched.

"Well, 'm," said she, "I'm sure I can't see nothing the matter with it. It's been a good trunk these many years, it has."

"Yes; but you see, travelling is different now," said Mrs. Atherstone.

“ Which I hear them nasty things a rattling away of a night, a killing everybody as goes by them. And it went right through John Huggins’s garden—the son of old John Huggins, him as used to live up by Plaxley Mill. Which they did use to say as a Englishman’s house were his castle, as nobody can say now, when they can take a poor man’s cottage away like that. And then to say as he could go somewhere else ! Why, in course he could. But what’s that when you have lived in the same place, man and boy, for sixty years, and your father and grandfather afore you ?— which Sir Roger wouldn’t never have turned him out, not he, and tried hard to get the line turned. I hate the sight of them, I do ; and you’ll never come back again if you go off in that way—never.”

“ She will make me cry, the pathetic old creature, if I let her go on in that way,” thought Mrs. Atherstone ; “ and I don’t want to do that. One can’t have lived more than half a century with one faithful companion, at the corner of four unfrequented roads, without growing at least as fond of her as she is of the old trunk. She is better than the old trunk ; for the trunk has no will, but she has, and has exercised it well—I wish I could feel sure that I have done the same.”

"But I have tried to do my best," suggested the devil, making the words appear to come quite naturally out of her thoughts, yet not so as to satisfy herself. This question was becoming ubiquitously obtrusive. Who would have expected it to turn up out of such a conversation as that? She took refuge in action and the limited indulgence of natural feeling.

"You dear old thing," she said, "I mean to come back again. Don't be afraid. There is no more danger in travelling so than in any other way. I don't say that I like it; but it can't be helped. I shall not be away long—a few weeks only, I dare say. But you must have some one to keep you company while I am away."

The old woman shook her head at this proposal, having grave doubts as to the chances of pleasant intercourse between herself and any one brought in to keep her company.

"Perhaps you would rather not have any one here?" said Mrs. Atherstone. "Well, then, do as you like. After all, you will have as much protection as we have always had. But I don't quite——"

"Oh! it's all right 'm," interrupted the old woman. "There's the man as always sleeps in the pantry. And as to the day time—why,

there's the old blunderbuss. And I'd use it, too—that I would, if I was to catch a fellow a-croaping about to rob the house. But I *do* wish you wouldn't go."

"Don't be afraid about me. I shall get on very well," said Mrs. Atherstone. "But I want you to do a commission for me. You must see if you can get a light cart to take you into Lyneham, and bring back a large portmanteau. Go at once, please, for I must finish my packing to-night. Stay, while I give you the money to pay for it. I suppose five pounds will be enough; but, perhaps, I had better give you two five-pound notes—and you may get me a carpet-bag, or some other small thing of the kind."

She went into the sitting-room, took the notes out of a drawer in the bureau, and returning, gave them to the old servant, who went off to do her commission without hesitating in her obedience. Only as she opened the door she was heard to mutter—"Which it is too good a trunk to be knocked about on them nasty railroads as goes through people's gardens, and——"

The shutting of the door broke off the remainder of the sentence, and Mrs. Atherstone took it up in her own thoughts.

“ You poor old trunk,” said she, addressing it as if it were alive. “ I *am* very fond of you, for you have never done me any harm, and I have never done any harm to you ; and in this kind of celibate seclusion in the world, one’s affections grow downwards, twining themselves loosely round natural objects. What o’clock is it ? Half-past eleven. Four miles to Lyneham. If she gets the cart she will be back by two, I suppose. I must write this thing now, and then pack, and be off by the first train in the morning. Let me see—when is the train ? Half-past eight ? I must walk to the station and ask, as soon as I have finished writing.”

She returned to the sitting-room, took a sheet of foolscap paper out of the bureau, and wrote as follows :—

“ I, Amelia Charlotte Atherstone, being of sound mind (which is a wonder, considering all it has had to bear), and of sound bodily health, in spite of my advanced age, and the doctor’s prognostications more than half a century ago, sit down to-day—the 26th day of September, 1870—to write this my last Will and testament. I have no patrimonial fortune whatever—why, it matters not, since this is not an autobiography, but a Will. My

income is derived from an annuity of three hundred a year on the Hazeley estate, out of which I have put by two thousand five hundred and fifty-seven pounds. Of this I shall take one thousand five hundred and fifty in a letter of credit with me on the journey I am about to undertake. The remaining thousand is invested in my name in the three-per-cent consols.

“ This thousand I leave unconditionally to my old and faithful servant, Susan Stubbs, and, failing her appointment, to the poor, at the discretion of my executor. I appoint Sir Roger Arden, of Bramscote, my executor—not that I know him, but because he lives near, and I can think of nobody else. I hope he will not refuse to do this service of charity. It is my wish that all my papers be given to the priest at Bramscote—not that I know him either, but because a Catholic priest will not tell the contents to the whole parish, as most people would do.

“ Susan Stubbs is to have everything that is in the house and about it. Failing her appointment, it is all to be sold for the use of the poor, and given in such a manner as my executor may think fit.

“ I shall put this Will in the mahogany

bureau that is in my sitting-room, and tell Susan Stubbs to deliver it herself to Sir Roger Arden in case of my death."

Then she lit a candle, brought out from the drawer of the bureau some black sealing-wax, and began to muse aloud as she folded up the paper.

"That sealing-wax has been there," said she, "ever since I came into this queer house, where I have lived a queer life—a very queer life, and oh, what a sad one! It is well for me that I have had this one idea, this one hope—above all, this one duty, to live for. There is something solid and hopeful, vigorous and honourable in the idea of duty—even when one fulfils it because it is something else as well. It is not duty that has made me go on hoping against hope to find John Sherborne's heir. But it is not duty that makes me set off now, old as I am, and without friends anywhere, and ignorant of the world's ways, and the railways, and all the ways by which people can and will make themselves obnoxious to me. It is not duty. Then what is it? It is an irresistible impulse to get rid of remorse by undoing as much as possible the cause of it."

She had better have looked straight at the

one paramount duty which concerned her most, instead of deceiving herself by a false humility, and getting out of her depth ; but so it was, and so it is every day in similar cases. Like Sherborne, she consulted her conscience with a reservation ; like him, she persuaded herself that she was examining it, when she was only drowning its voice by asking it questions that were not to the point ; like him, she diverted her attention from the duty she continued to evade by musing over the omissions of others ; like him, she did this while looking towards the truth, but not at it, and repeating continually, “ I look, but I cannot see.”

She sealed the paper slowly, musing in a spirit of unspeakable sadness. The sudden shock to the habits of fifty-six years, the new exertion of packing, and the preparation for an indefinite travelling, had excited in her a false gaiety, the reaction from which was rapid and intense.

“ A miserable old woman,” she said, “ and that is the end of it all. Miserable in the past—if a brief delirium be excepted ; miserable in the present, which is but a dreamland for sad memories, and a point from which to measure the distance to the end ; miserable in

the future, that stretches out, hopeless and menacing, into infinite space and infinite time. A miserable old woman, who would have gone mad long ago but for excessive reading and study, and what people call cultivation, which has produced no crop except weeds—means of self-torment and, perhaps——”

Here she pushed the sealing-wax into the flame of the candle, and, while it dropped in thick masses on the folded paper, said—

“ And perhaps—the means of self-deception. Nonsense ! why does this rubbish come into my head so often to-day ? Look there, now, at that wax—black, so black—everything about me is so black ! I might have saved *him*—Alfred ; he inclined *that way*—as—as I did—perhaps more. And persecution would only have roused my courage—*pluck* they would call it now. I have plenty of *that*, and now, when he lies dead in that cold slimy vault, under the great family pew that was once the Lady Chapel, before the nation turned cur first and then apostate, I am hankering after what I refused while I could have——”

She broke off again. Tears, hot and blistering, blinded her as she plunged a large old-fashioned seal into the seething mass of wax.

“ While I could have——” she repeated,

and then stopped again, unable to finish the sentence. “While I—— But what am I sealing this for when it isn’t witnessed ? ”

She broke the seal, tore the paper open, and wrote on the outside : “I, who sealed this, have broken the seal because I had forgotten to have my signature witnessed.—A. C. A.”

“Lest some pettifogging lawyer should call it a suspicious circumstance, and rob old Susan of her money. Perhaps, after all, I had better get it done properly by a lawyer, as I go through London. I ought to have done this long ago.”

She threw down her pen, and burying her face in her hands, burst into tears, weeping passionately, as she would have wept fifty-seven years before. Then the flood of tears dried up, and the long continued sobbings, that shook the old table, ceased by degrees.

“He lies dead,” she muttered—“dead in that cold slimy vault ; and shall I hanker for what I refused when—when I might have been one with him in accepting it ? Refuse it for *him* then, and accept it for myself now ? No ! No !

“No ! ” she repeated in a scream that might have been heard in the lane.

By this one suggestion the devil had en-

listed in his service her strongest feeling and her strongest defect—that love for Alfred Sherborne which had marred and moulded her life, that pride of firmness which had enabled her to live alone for upwards of half a century, without going mad at continual contemplation of a sorrow that neither diminished in degree nor varied in kind. And there was no one to brush away the flimsy sophism.

“No!” she shrieked, and started up, clutching the leather case as she rose; then carrying it to the bureau, she said in the same tone of passionate despair, crumpling the leather case between her fingers, and pushing it violently into the centre compartment between the two rows of pigeon holes, “I cannot, and I *will* not believe.”

Such was the nervous force of the movement, and the resistance at the other end of the compartment, that the leather doubled up in her hand, and her forefingers pressed heavily against the back of the bureau. She felt something give way, and then resist with an elastic sort of thrust like a spring.

“A secret drawer, I suppose,” thought she. “All these odd, old bits of furniture have them. I must look and see how to shut it up again.”

Pulling the leather case out carefully she muttered—

“I cannot, and I *will* not believe. That is, I can’t, and so I won’t. What is the use of saying one will if one can’t? And perhaps I won’t because I can’t be one with him in it now, and wouldn’t when I could. No! I won’t—I won’t, I say, I won’t separate myself from him. The won’t is too strong for me: it possesses my whole being: it is equivalent to can’t. Of course it is—of course, of course.”

Then she suddenly became interested in the secret drawer, refused to think, and burst into a hard artificial laugh.

“Perhaps I shall find old Moreton’s love letters,” she said, pulling the drawer out with a jerk and smiling in acute angles.

The drawer exactly fitted the space at the back, and was so narrow that its width might have been mistaken for the thickness of the wood.

“Perhaps there is one underneath,” she thought. “I must have a look. How childish it is of me to feel any curiosity about a secret drawer! There can’t be anything in it—at any rate, nothing that would concern me, nothing that could throw any light on anything I want to know. And besides—Don Pascolini’s letter

gives me all the information I want. For we know that John Sherborne's eldest son is dead; so that Count de Bergerac, being, as it clearly appears that he is, the eldest son of the eldest, or eldest surviving son of the younger, *must* be the heir.

"So all I have got to do is to find him out. Nevertheless, here is this drawer, and I must have a try. How natural is curiosity to a woman! There is a spring at this left corner, I think by the feel—and there it is."

A narrow piece of oak, even with the surface of the whole compartment, and exactly covering the space on which the drawer had rested, began to slide off. She pushed it, and it slid away into a groove on the right, disclosing a narrow space beneath. It was about two inches in width, rather less than more. Its depth could not be seen, owing to its extreme narrowness and the impossibility of looking down into it. She reached as far as she could with her forefinger, and found nothing but space. Then she tried a long pair of scissors with the same result.

"Where can it go to?" she said, and went to look for an obsolete instrument called lazy tongs. It was no easy work to manœuvre them in so small a space, as any one who has

ever handled lazy tongs will know; but at length she induced them to go into the narrow space and stretch downwards. They found the bottom at a depth of eight or nine inches.

"Oh! but there *must* be something in it after all this," she exclaimed—"a Queen Anne's penny, or perhaps an old account book."

Then came a fit of laughter that gave relief but not enjoyment, and then she made another dig with the lazy tongs.

"I do declare," said she, "there *is* something; I can feel it—paper folded. But I can't get hold of it with these things. I must try something else."

She brought a knitting needle. It was not long enough to reach the bottom or prize up the paper; but it reached as far as the seal, which was large with a thick rim of wax protruding upwards, like a wall, round the impression.

"This will do it," said she, sticking the knitting needle just under the protruding wax, and gently raising up the paper.

The process was slow, because the sealing wax was slippery and the knitting needle blunt; but at length the top of the paper appeared at the narrow aperture of the secret

place, so that she could seize it with her finger and thumb. It was a small thick packet, directed to somebody; but the ink was pale, of a yellowish tinge, and indistinct. She put on her spectacles, and holding the packet up to the light, read aloud—

“For John Moreton.

“From E. M., July 16th, 1810.”

“Good gracious!” said she, taking off her spectacles, and putting them on again. “What can this be? John Moreton! That must have been the old rector of Fernham. Let me see now. He came to live there in the year '24; and his wife died, and he married again; and his son—the young man I made come here with Don Pascolini, because I felt sure he would turn out of use somehow, but he hasn't yet—is the son of the second wife. Well, then, this packet must have been meant for old Moreton—but by whom? ‘E. M.’ His mother, I suppose. But why has it never been opened? and why was it hidden away? and what am I to do with it, when I don't even know where young Moreton is to be found? What a load of other people's concerns my old shoulders have to bear! Well, in it goes into the

leather bag, and perhaps I may fall in with him somewhere, or hear of him."

And in it went, with Don Pascolini's letter, the old diary, and documents of various sizes. The leather bag had a lock and key, and, except when brought out for use, was either kept with her money, in a fire-proof safe let into the wall of her bedroom, or stowed away in the bureau. The former was its place whenever she went out, and there she put it now, in company with her Will.

"Now I must go to the station, to ask about the train, and get two people to witness my signature," said she, sitting down to meditate and conjecture concerning the packet. "I had better sign this, in case anything should happen to me before I get to London."

But before many minutes had elapsed there was a sound of wheels—the heavy rattling sound that heralds the approach of a light cart. She got up and walked to the window, looking at her watch as she went; and seeing the carrier's cart draw up at the door, with old Susan, the carrier, and another man in it, said to herself—

"How convenient! these two men will just do to witness my signature."

Then she went downstairs and opened the door, saying to old Susan—

“ You have been very quick about it ; ” and to the men—“ Will you be so kind as to witness my signature ? ”

The men followed her into the sitting-room, witnessed her signature, and went away. Then old Susan showed her purchases with much satisfaction.

“ Yes—a very good portmanteau, strong and roomy,” said Mrs. Atherstone. “ And the bag, too. They couldn’t be better. Thank you, Susan. You have done your commission famously. And now—stay ! Call them back. I want to speak to them.

Old Susan opened the window and screamed as loud as she could—

“ Hi ! come back a moment ! ” Mrs. Atherstone did the same. The carrier pulled up, and slowly turned round.

“ When is the first up-train in the morning ? ” said Mrs. Atherstone.

“ At five and twenty minutes past eight, ma’am,” said the carrier.

“ Ah ! then I shall want you,” said she, “ to take my portmanteau to the station for that train to-morrow morning. Be here not later than half-past seven. Thank you, that is all.

Now then, Susan, just attend to what I am going to say."

"Yes, 'm," said Susan, dilating her eyes into a blank expanse, and twirling the corner of her apron round her thumbs.

Mrs. Atherstone took the Will from the table, and laid some blotting-paper upon it; then, folding it up and placing it in one of the pigeon-holes of the bureau, she said—

"Look here. You see where I have put that?"

"Yes, 'm."

"That paper is my Will. Do you understand?"

"Yes, 'm."

"When I die——"

"Lor, 'm, don't!"

"Well, but every one must die, some time or other, you know; and if people don't arrange their affairs while they are alive, why—don't you see?—they won't be able to do it afterwards."

Old Susan nodded her assent to the proposition, but would not commit herself to any statement. She perceived the connection between the Will and the journey.

"Whenever I die, whether here or elsewhere," said Mrs. Atherstone, "mind that

you open the bureau (I am going to leave the key with you) take out that paper—my Will—you understand ? ”

“ Yes, 'm, I understand.”

“ And you must take it to Sir Roger Arden, at Bramscote—yes, yes, to him—I have my reasons. I have left you a little independence, so that you will not have to go among strangers.”

This was too much for old Susan, the apron went up to her eyes, and she sobbed aloud.

“ You dear old thing, it won't make me die any sooner,” said Mrs. Atherstone.

But old Susan retired to her little room, among the old trunks, and would not be comforted.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked ?”—*Henry IV.*

At or about half-past eight o'clock next morning the train started from the little station of Ferry Corner—puff, puff, puff, puff, to the music of the guard's whistle. Among the passengers were Mrs. Atherstone and Miss Hermione Crumps: whereat the latter said “ Lor ! ” but was in a different carriage and got out soon. Mrs. Atherstone, who had not travelled at all since the Christmas of 1812, when she arrived at Lyneham in a stage-coach on her way to Hazeley, sat upright and read Murray's handbooks apparently with much composure. The black leather bag, containing all her important documents, she carried on her left arm, as ladies used once to carry what was called a reticule. She reached London by two o'clock, instructed that eminent firm,

Messrs. Foreclose and Grabbit, to make her Will, left written directions with them about sending it to Sir Roger Arden, in case of her death, took up her quarters in one of the enormous modern hotels with seven storeys, belonging to a company (limited), and, finally, went to bed early, feeling very tired, but not sleepy.

It was not until the following day that she was impressed with the novelty of her position. She felt it when she awoke and found herself in a strange room, hearing a strange jumble of distant sounds, and looking out upon a forest of dark red chimney pots through a yellowish grey atmosphere, tinged in the east with a diffused light, hot and vapoury. She listened awhile, and looked at the chimneys. Then she began to remember, and compare, and realize.

“People never feel astonished in a dream,” said she, sitting up in bed and meditating. “*I* was in a kind of dream all yesterday, everything was so strange, that (what a queer sight it is, all those chimney pots!) everything was so strange, that it all seemed as if I were accustomed to it. The fact is, my mind was so taken up with the present, that it had no room for anything to compare the present

with. I feel very odd now, though; it all comes before me in a moment, like a scroll held up in one hand and tumbled out at once."

Then she dressed as quickly as possible, packed up, and went to breakfast.

"I am like a toad who has lived for a hundred years inside a wall, and creeps out when repairs are done," said she to herself, as she ordered the bill.

The bill was the first thing that astonished her. She counted it up many times, measured with her eye its length in inches, considered its items, and finally made a series of protests, to the waiter who brought it, to the porter in the hall, to the smart young woman who sat in state near the entrance. But the waiter made round eyes, and referred her to the manager; the porter referred her to the young woman sitting in state; the young woman sitting in state only tossed her chignon, and turned away to take a parcel from an errand-boy.

"Where is the manager, then?" said Mrs. Atherstone, holding the bill up in both hands, one at each end, significantly.

"He went out a few minutes ago," answered the porter, scraping his thumb nails with his two forefingers.

"I call it cheating," said she in an audible voice, pulling out a long silk purse from her pocket. "I will never come here again—never. I can't bear to be cheated."

With this final protest she paid the bill, and soon afterwards was on her travels again.

She had no adventure between London and Dover, but she had two conversations—one with a man of business, whom she astonished by saying that she had missed the old Charlies in London, preferred oil-lamps to gas, and had not been to London, till the preceding day, since she was fifteen, fifty-nine years before ; the other with a college tutor. The man of business collapsed, and would have taken her for one of the seven sleepers—if the idea had occurred to him. The college tutor was amused and interested. He soon became astonished. He began by saying—

"Do you take much interest in the war?"

"Yes!" she replied, "I have had nothing to do for the last fifty-six years, but to read and observe."

"You went in for study——"

"Yes, or I should have gone out of my mind. I have lived alone, with one servant, my books, and the remembrance of bitter sorrows. The books gave me something to

think of, the quaint, old-fashioned servant something to care for. She is so faithful and true. I think she saved me from becoming a savage. I have no friends, I might as well have had no relatives, and I never could see that a pet dog would do instead of all human ties."

"A very remarkable old woman," thought the college tutor. "I wish I were not obliged to get out at the next station."

"Of all the events that have taken place in your recollection," said he, "those of the last few months are, perhaps, the most interesting, viewed in the light of their consequences."

"They will be viewed in the light of a social conflagration before many years are over, if people don't mind," she replied.

"I think not," said he. "In all repairs there is necessarily a disturbance of the thing repaired."

"Certainly. But if you take out the few good stones remaining, and repair with rubbish, the disturbance will be a warning of a crash."

"I won't argue," thought he, "but only draw her out. I wish the next station were farther."

"What do you think about the occupation of Rome?" he asked.

"As I should of a man committing burglary in his father's house after somebody else had muzzled the mastiff," she replied.

"I think you will find," said he, "that the Romish priesthood are divided in their views with regard to——"

"My dear sir," interrupted Mrs. Atherstone, raising her right hand with a gesture of strong decision, and laying it vigorously on the arm of the seat, "I must protest against that word 'Romish.' I dare say you will think me very self-opinionated—and perhaps I am—I have lived alone so much. But I *do* like a word to mean what I mean, when I use it, or assent to its use."

"Undoubtedly," said the college tutor, adding within himself, "I have half a mind to forget about getting out at Tunbridge—only they will have sent to fetch me."

"And," said she, "before a term is applied to an individual or a class, or to any act or principle of any person or persons, as individuals, or as a body——"

"Am I awake? or is this a mixture of indigestion and woman's suffrage?" said the college tutor to himself.

"——it seems only just that it should have a definite meaning, and be what it pretends to

be. Now the term ‘Romish’ isn’t definite, for its meaning varies with the mind of the speaker, and makes impressions by inferences, which (begging everybody’s pardon) is hardly honest: it isn’t what it pretends to be, for it pretends to mean the mere fact of belonging to the Church whose centre is Rome, and its head the Pope of Rome, when its real meaning——”

A protracted whistle and scraping of iron against iron told that they were pulling up at Tunbridge. The college tutor caught up his carpet bag, umbrella, and railway wrapper.

“ Its real meaning ? ”

“ Varies much, but is always abusive. I think it may be broadly stated that ‘Rome’ in that sense means the embodiment of some mysterious principle, which is, must be, or ought to be, the sworn enemy of no one quite knows what, and that ‘Romish’ means characterized by that principle, so as necessarily to be held in undefined suspicion.”

“ But,” said the college tutor, as the train stopped for the examination of tickets, “ I know some Roman Catholics very well, and I am sure I have no suspicions about them of any kind.”

“ Ah ! ” said Mrs. Atherstone, “ I know that

happens so very often, and I never could understand the process of reasoning, by which a person can be supposed to live and act voluntarily as a rogue, and be honest all the same."

"I—I *almost* wonder you are not one," said he, as he gave his ticket to the guard.

"Not what—a rogue?" said she, with a grave twinkle of fun in her eyes.

"You caught me there," he replied, laughing. "Of course I meant to say—but it isn't quite right to say it."

"Please do," said she. "You won't do me any harm. I don't recollect that I was ever influenced in my life."

"I almost wonder (I was going to say) that you are not a Roman——"

"There is no occasion for that prefix——"

"——Catholic."

"So do I."

"Then, if it is not an impertinent question, what is it that prevents you?"

"Pride, I think, and intellectual congestion from intellectual cramming, and, perhaps——"

At that moment a multitude of voices bawled—"Tunbridge, Tunbridge, Tunbridge;" "*Times, Daily News, Standard, Telegraph, Echo;*" "Stop ten minutes;" "Hi! porter!" "This way, ma'am;" "Clap a label on that

gun-case, will you ? ” “ Open the door, I say ; ” “ Hallo ! bring me a *Telegraph* ; ” “ Tunbridge —change for Tunbridge Wells ; ” “ Hi ! open the door ! Are there no porters here ? ” etc., etc., etc.

“ —and, perhaps, for want of opposition,” said Mrs. Atherstone, in the midst of the turmoil. “ The female mind is often developed best by what used to be called, when I was a child, the rule of contrary. Opposition makes you take a side, instead of halting between two; and if it comes from the wrong side you choose right, and so you are all right ; but—— ”

A burly man in knickerbockers, a large lady with a small hat on the top of her head, two small boys, three little girls, and a pug dog, here claimed the attention and presence of the college tutor, who got out, saying—

“ Good morning ! I—I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again.”

“ I hope so,” said Mrs. Atherstone, adding to herself, “ But I don’t see any chance of it.”

In ten minutes more the guard whistled, porters opened the doors and slammed them, the train bumped and jolted itself out of the station, passed a hissing luggage train, and gradually settled down into an even forty miles an hour, the engine beating time in that

peculiar manner which has been interpreted, "making money for the Quakers," though it does not appear that railway investments have been exclusively profitable to the Society of Friends.

The man of business looked up from his newspaper, meditated on the city article awhile, and disposed himself for conversation by a preliminary cough. He was a man of shrewd common sense, within a certain range, and of clear, though not quick intuition, to a limited depth. He saw that Mrs. Atherstone was worth talking to, notwithstanding her predilection for Charlies and oil lamps, or any other peculiarity that might turn up in talking. She, too, was disposed to converse with him or with any one else, and she ingenuously confessed the fact at the outset of their brief conversation, which was terminated for them at Penshurst by the entrance of a loquacious lady with two daughters and a young man, who all talked at once and continuously. The brief conversation ran thus :—

Man of Business. " You had an interesting conversation with the gentleman who got out at Tunbridge."

Mrs. Atherstone. " It was very interesting to me, apart from what we were talking about.

Talking is a new sensation to me in my old age—I mean, of course, talking and being talked to. I used to talk to myself, and found a kind of safety valve for my pent-up thoughts, like the man who dug a hole in the ground and told it that Midas had an ass's ears. But, then, one can't answer one's self; or if one does, it doesn't come fresh to one's mind; and above all, one meets with no opposition; one doesn't oppose one's self really; one scourges one's own fallacies gently against the wind, after the fashion of—wasn't it Sancho Panza."

Man of Business. "Were you not rather hard on your own sex a little while ago, if I understood you rightly? I understood you to mean that women are specially adapted to do well under opposition."

Mrs. Atherstone. "Yes; but I don't think I was hard on them at all. Women are naturally more exposed to opposition in matters of conscience than men are, owing to their natural home-dependence on parents, husbands, and others; therefore, unless they had naturally a latent spirit of opposition, neither good nor bad in itself, but depending for that on the motive that calls it forth, and the manner in which it is exercised, they would not, so to speak, have a fair chance.

It would be having a free will in theory without the power of using it in practice."

Man of Business. " Well, really, I never thought of the matter in that light. I'll make a note of it, and think it over. But suppose the spirit of opposition is called forth by being opposed in doing wrong ? "

Mrs. Atherstone. " That is exactly what makes women so unreasonable when they take a wrong line in anything. But the natural instinct of a healthy-minded woman is to yield when duty does not bid her resist. Depend upon it, there is something out of joint when you find it otherwise."

Man of Business. " I presume—— ”

Mrs. Atherstone. " No, don't ! ”

Man of Business. " I — I beg your pardon ! ”

Mrs. Atherstone. " Oh ! nothing. It must have been a jolt of the carriage. I am not used to railway travelling.”

Man of Business. " I was going to ask you what you thought of what they call women's rights ? ”

Mrs. Atherstone. " My dear sir, I am a woman, and therefore I have no patience with people who want to turn women into inferior men. If *they* had their rights they would be

put in the stocks, as people used to be when I was young."

Man of Business (smiling, yet rather scandalized). "But not for an opinion——"

Mrs. Atherstone. "Ah! well, but you mustn't expect those little niceties of justice from a woman. Women have a quick and keen intuition of broad principles, but in applying them their minds are often hazy about the fitness of things. That is why they are so pre-eminently suited to train children and influence men. For (don't you see?) you must keep to broad principles with infant minds. Modifications would only puzzle them, and the good influence of a wife (of course I am speaking of average cases) is more in broad lines than in exact details: it is a power that persuades by developing the heart of the person influenced, more than by distinctly pointing out the end required."

Man of Business (who has learned to be cautious in committing himself to a principle.) "I shall think over what you have said. One can't give an opinion all at once on such a subject."

Mrs. Atherstone (her eyes twinkling as before). "You mean as to whether the people ought to be put in the stocks?"

Man of Business (almost jumping out of his seat). “ Gracious me ! No, not that ! ”

Mrs. Atherstone. “ Ah ! now you see the difference between a man and a woman. You are scandalized at the unfitness of the remedy. I only see that these people ought to be trounced in some way or other, and I can’t see the harm of putting them in the stocks. These attempts to make women something they are not, irritate me inexpressibly. Is it a small thing to have the power and privilege and responsibility of training human beings at an age when impressions are permanent, and precepts have roots ? Is it a small thing to foster and develop all that is best in the heart and mind of a husband, by an influence that none but a woman can possess—an influence powerful as it is gentle—felt, but unseen ? Is all this nothing ? Yet very ordinary women can do this, and do it ; and then a lot of people, who have nothing of women in them, except their unreasonableness and their petticoats, want to turn a parcel of pert girls into medical students (which is very immodest of them), and want to stick themselves forward (I wonder what St. Paul would have said ?) on platforms and school-boards, and what-not. They think it all very fine,

and, as Burke wrote of the French Revolutionists, they think they are combating prejudice, but they are at war with nature. I repeat that I *should* like to put them in the stocks. But I was going to ask you what you think the best way of getting to Italy. One can't go by Paris now, I suppose. I was consulting a map and a foreign Bradshaw, and it seemed that I had better go by Brussels, Cologne, Bâsle, Lucerne, and St. Gothard."

Man of Business. "Yes; you won't meet with anything disagreeable that way."

Mrs. Atherstone. "I want to get on as far as Lisle to-night, if I have time. But I really must dine at Calais. Hippocrates may say what he likes about old men being better able to fast than others, but I know that old women are not."

Man of Business. "You seem to have read a great deal."

Mrs. Atherstone. "Oh! don't tell me that. I hate blue stockings, strong-minded women, and all that. When one lives alone for fifty-six years one must do something, or go mad, or become an idiot; so I took to instructing myself, and was not the first instructor that knew no more than the instructed. In D'Israeli's 'Miscellanies of Literature' there is

a chapter on the self-educated—it is where he tells of Moses Mendelssohn sitting down on the steps of houses in Berlin, by moonlight, to learn Latin from a vagrant Polish Jew—and he says they are marked by stubborn peculiarities. I dare say I am stubborn and peculiar, and certainly you must think me so for wanting to put the ‘Women’s Rights’ people in the stocks; but I don’t think that the little serious reading I have had (mere playing at study) can have had anything to do with it.”

Man of Business. “I assure you I have been very much interested in all you have said, and——”

Voces of various railway officials as the train stopped: “Penshurst—Penshurst—Penshurst.”

It was at this moment that the large lady, her two daughters, and a young man appeared at the window of the carriage, all talking at once, and calling out, “Here, porter, open the door!”

Then the man of business betook himself to the *Times*, and got out at Paddock Wood. Mrs. Atherstone glanced at Murray’s handbook, and then looked about at the country till the train came in sight of the sea near Hythe, when she exclaimed—

"Oh, what a glorious sight. This *is* a new sensation."

The sight made her feel young again. Nothing in it bore any resemblance to any scene connected with her past life. Everything was new and fresh, not only to the eye but to the imagination. The horizon seemed so distant across the expanse of blue water; the line of golden light above was so suggestive of indefinite beauty beyond.

After a while that freshness became too keen, like an intense frost under a brilliant sky. It sharpened her sensations overmuch, and made her feel faint at heart. Her eyes filled with tears, but she could not take them off the sea. She saw as through a mist, and presently thought aloud, as it was her old custom to do.

"This is too much, after the first impression," she thought, "at least, for me, seeing it at the end of seventy-five winters for the first time. The symbols have changed so, in a few minutes. That vast expanse of blue water, with a misty light above the horizon, and ships just disappearing beyond it, made life seem to be in the future; but now the whole scene tells of the past, and intensifies everything—even what I have no concern with.

These fishing-boats, or whatever they are, even they are oppressive. They have a story of their own time, and of centuries before—the story of all that can be remembered or imagined as happening while they or other such were in being. I would look no more, but I can't help looking. I can't help it—I can't help it."

But the symbols changed again. The line of golden light above the horizon seemed, as it were, the entrance to the indefinitely beautiful, and a voice within her said that the indefinitely beautiful was but a pictorial way of expressing the faith seen as yet dimly, yet in a way that could not be mistaken.

"Yes," she said, "how wonderfully our Lord condescends to the circumstances and peculiarities of the wretched creatures to whom He gives His priceless treasures! First my instinct of opposition was roused by a man using the word 'Romish' in a fat voice. Then the sea burst upon my sight, and it made me feel young again at first, and then indescribably oppressed, and then—oh! then, and now, and for ever—I see clearly. Yes, I see what I felt long ago, and ought to have seen, and did see, but with a shadow before it. How long and how obstinately

have I resisted the grace of God, and yet not quite in wilfulness. I cannot analyze how the truth has come home to me, but I can trace its last steps—feel it—see it—know it."

The train slackened speed, and in two or three minutes more entered the station at Dover, jolting and banging alongside of the platform, till it pulled up heavily where a line of faces looking into the carriage windows fronted a line of faces looking out of them, her own included.

A great calmness had come over her, new to her experience, yet not strange to her understanding, an external cause, an internal effect, an atmosphere of peace that was her own because she breathed it into her soul.

A bustling porter and a creaking truck brought her luggage to the steamer, which was filling the air with columns of black smoke. She looked about, from one end of the deck to the other, and the prospect seemed to her otherwise than encouraging. The engine-room smelt of heated iron and grease. The passengers nearest to her looked not only prepared, but determined to be sea-sick, and a sailor was dragging a rope from under every one's feet. She elected to go below, with her leather bag, her guide-book, and her umbrella,

but had better not have done so. The cabin smelt miscellaneous, and the countenances of its inmates, of a yellow paleness, most suggestive, expressed, in a sense applicable to the place—

“Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’ entrate.”

She had better have remained on deck.

And yet, perhaps, that would not have saved her from suffering a sea change. The expanse of clear blue water, with the golden light above the horizon, had a swell on, for there had been wind the day before; so that the steamer descended at intervals into a small abyss of unsteady water, causing sensations unutterable, and reducing several human beings to a state of absolute passiveness. At the end of two hours Mrs. Atherstone appeared on deck, little, if at all, the worse for the peculiar effect of the treacherous elements: but now her first real trial as a traveller was to begin. Her big portmanteau arrived safely at the Custom-house on the shoulders of a Herculean fishwoman, the carpet-bag was carried by a *commissionaire*, self-elected for that office, whilst others of the same craft thrust cards of different hotels in her face as she walked. So far all went well, and the scene amused her;

but, inside the custom-house, a man in a cocked hat wanted to take her leather bag!

Virgil tells us that, on the occasion of Æneas's visit to the shades below, the Greeks, when they saw *The man*, "ut vidère virum," trembled with a great fear, some fairly turning tail, and others protesting in a feeble manner. Custom-house authorities at Calais are not so susceptible to potent appearances; nevertheless the man in the cocked hat was kept at bay by the resolute aspect of Mrs. Atherstone; and so was the head man, who came to see what was the matter, and his subordinates, and the *commissionnaires*, and the irritable old gentleman who wanted to be off by the next train for Brussels.

Yet the position was critical. The subordinate officials after a while began to draw round and gesticulate—the man in the cocked hat muttered strange oaths, the head man thrust both his hands into the pockets of his baggy trousers, and said—

"Enfin, Madame——"

While Mrs. Atherstone kept declaring alternately in English and French that everything she cared for in the world was in her black bag, and that she would not let it out of her hands under any consideration.

The adventure was on the point of taking a disagreeable turn, for Mrs. Atherstone finally declared in distinct though not very idiomatic French, that she would sooner go back at once to Dover in an open fishing-boat than resign her leather bag to anybody, and one of the officials thereupon stated his belief that she had got a secret despatch for the Prussians—when an English traveller, hearing sounds of distress articulated in a British accent, made his way through the small crowd, and seeing how the affair stood, said to her—

“It will be all right if you just unlock the bag, and show them that you have nothing contraband in it.”

It was Sir Roger Arden—the very man she had chosen for her executor, the very man most likely, as she thought, to know where Count de Bergerac could be found. She took his advice, and was able to keep the leather bag peaceably. Then Sir Roger, who felt much astonished at meeting his mysterious neighbour from the Four Ways in a French Custom-house, but was too well-bred to let her perceive it, went on to say—

“I ought to have the pleasure of being acquainted with you, and I have often wished to be. Will you allow me to consider myself

so now, and to ask you if I can be of any service?"

"Oh, yes; indeed you can," she replied impulsively. "You can help me in every sort of way."

Sir Roger winced a little at this internally, for it occurred to him that so large an interpretation of his proffered assistance might be inconvenient, and his cheeks glowed with a sudden heat as he remembered certain vague reports about some monomania of hers respecting the Hazeley estate. It passed through his mind in an instant, and so did these words—

"No! I can't—I really can't listen to that. I'd better say so at once."

But a woman's wit is not often at fault. Mrs. Atherstone saw what was passing through his mind, and answered as if she were not answering—

"Yes! do you know, it *is* in every sort of way; for I am ignorant of everything connected with foreign travel, and I am going to Italy. I am old, and for the last winter or two I have felt the cold a good deal. So I am going to try a warm climate and come back the end of May, if I live to do so."

"How uncharitable I was to think she had any design of that sort!" thought Sir Roger.

“I can’t think how I missed you on board the steamer,” he said.

“I was so silly as to go below,” she replied. “Nothing shall ever get me into the cabin again. I had rather be drenched with sea-water.”

By this time her luggage had been examined, and the *commissionaires* asked where it was to be sent. She looked up expressively at Sir Roger, and said—

“Should you advise me to go on, or stay here to-night? Is there a good hotel?”

“Yes; I used to like the old one better, but they have pulled it down.”

“Where Sterne wrote his ‘Sentimental Journey’?”

“Yes; an old-fashioned place with a garden to it. But anyhow, as you ask me, I should advise your stopping here to-night.”

“Well, I think I must, I am so tired.”

Whereupon Sir Roger offered his arm, saying, “I think you will find it pleasanter to walk, and let the luggage be rattled over the stones by itself. Allow me to introduce my daughters.”

As he was about to do so, it struck him that he remembered, when a boy, some story about her having changed her name, either

on coming to live with old Mrs. Sherborne at Hazeley, or when she took the house at the Four Ways.

"What shall I call her?" thought he. "People are so affronted if one gets their name wrong. I have heard she is well connected; and perhaps, now that she has come out of her hiding-place, it may affront her very much not to be called by her right name. But I don't know what it is!"

He tried to pronounce confusedly the name that he did remember, hoping that it would not be heard amid the din of omnibuses and *commissionaires*; but Mrs. Atherstone's quick ears detected the attempt. She smiled and said—

"I took for a purpose that name which people try so hard to get rid of when they have it naturally. But there is no reason why I should not tell you who I am. My name is Atherstone."

"Of Braxmore?"

"Yes; my father was a younger son, and married, and was poor, and—perhaps you have heard of my coming to Hazeley in old Mrs. Sherborne's time. It was before you were born. Well, the fact is, I got on badly at home, and my home got on badly with me.

I was poor, too, for my father was a younger son, with a large family; and so Mrs. Sherborne, who was an old friend of the family, took me—it really was out of charity, and she was very, very kind. When she died I came to the house at the Four Ways, and changed my name—but that is all past and gone. I have never seen any one of my own family from the day I left home, or any one connected with my family, till now. You are the first—you are remotely connected. An ancestor of yours married one of my family long ago."

"To be sure," said Sir Roger. "There was an intermarriage—I think it was—"

"Long, long ago, before my family apostatized," said Mrs. Atherstone with decision.

"A curious old lady, that," thought Sir Roger. "What am I to say? I hate getting on that subject with Protestants, for it does no good, and—"

But the curious old lady gave him no time to think further, for she added in a very distinct voice—

"Yes, apostatized—one may as well call things by their right names. One of them—the head of the family at the time—apostatized before God, and turned cur before men. Have I expressed myself plainly enough?"

He assured her emphatically that she had, and both the Miss Ardens did the same.

"Well, I suppose I have," said she. "It's a way of mine, and all the more so in this case, because I feel that I share the reproach. The fact is, I ought to have been a Catholic years and years ago. Well! that's a long story; but the end of it is, that——"

Sir Roger listened attentively for the rest of the sentence, and so did the Miss Ardens, but the sentence was not finished.

"But what *is* the end of it, I wonder," thought he, as they walked on in silence to the hotel. "And why did she break off in that way? And what is the meaning of her altogether? I suppose she isn't mad. I rather wish though that I had not volunteered to be quite so civil."

But when they had arrived at the hotel his kind heart silenced his caution.

"She is old, and she looks tired and solitary," he said to himself. "I *must* be civil to her."

And both the Miss Ardens, being impressed with the same kindly feeling, whispered—

"Oh! do ask her to stop with us this evening. She looks so lonely."

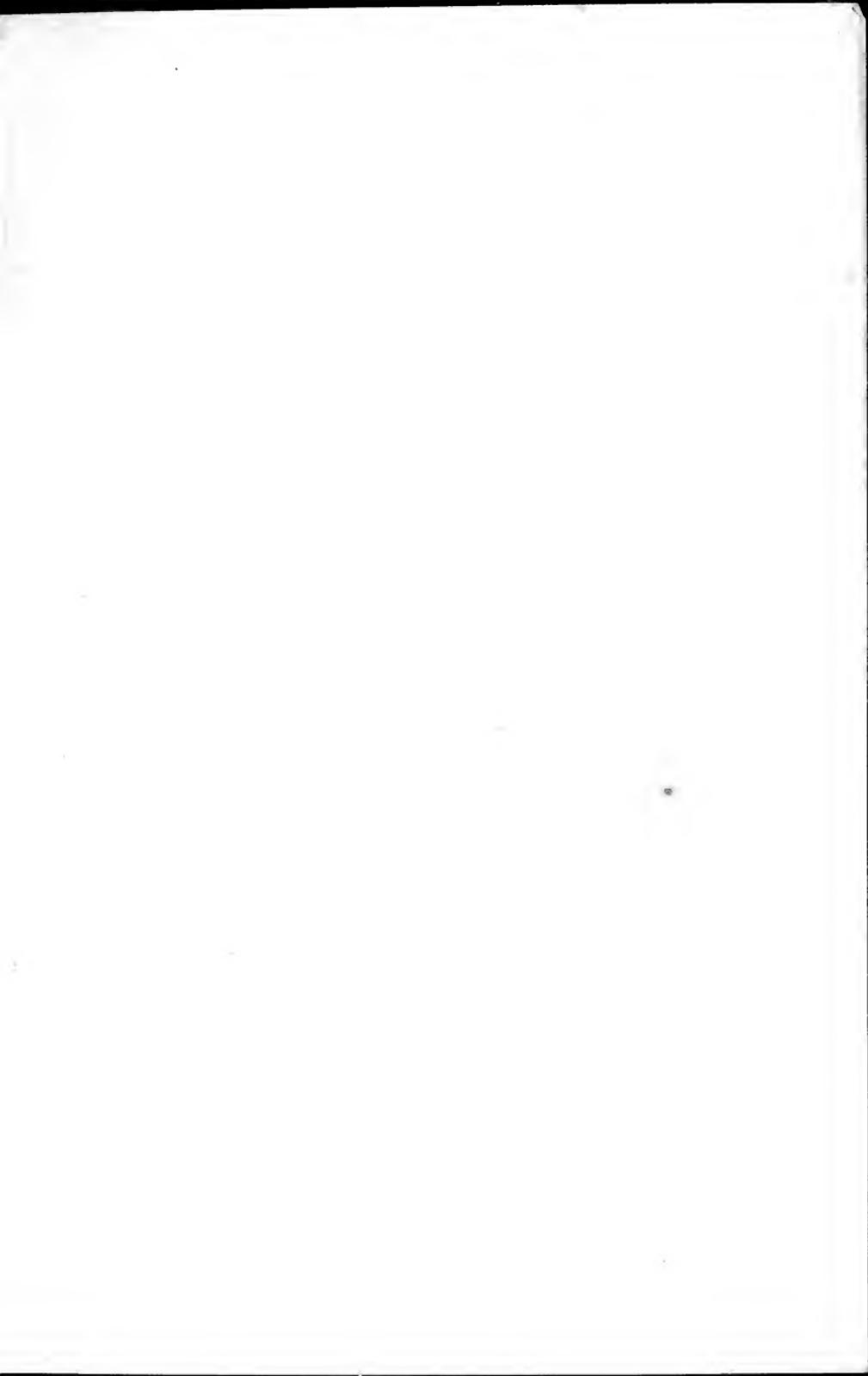
The result was that, after dinner, she sat

talking with them in their sitting-room till ten o'clock, telling them much, but saying nothing about Sherborne or the dispossessed heir.

This was the end of her second day's journey.

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